

but I should certainly be glad if you would take a letter for me to the head of the Detective Department, and tell him what I think, and my reasons for thinking so, and say that I offer a reward of a hundred pounds for the capture of the man who tried to stop us, and who was, we are certain, wounded by you. Unless he has some marvelously out-of-the-way hiding-place, it ought not to be difficult. A wounded man could scarcely lie hidden in the slums of London without it being known to a good many people, to some of whom a reward of the sum of a hundred pounds would be an irresistible temptation."

By this time they had reached Reigate. The inquest did not last many minutes, and the jury without hesitation returned a verdict of justifiable homicide.

CHAPTER VII.

THE next morning Mark went up to London.

"Of course, Mr. Thorndyke," the chief at Bow Street said, "your father's suspicions as to the man's identity may or may not be justified; that, however, makes no difference to us. Here is a highwayman who has been wounded, and would certainly be a valuable capture. I will set my men to work at once; if he is in London they will get news of him before many days. My men in any case would do their duty, but your father's offer will certainly stimulate their energy. Where are you stopping?"

"At the Bull, in Holborn."

"Very well; I will be sure to let you know as soon as we get any clew to the man's identity."

Mark remained in London a week, and at the end of that time he received a note from Bow Street saying that the superintendent wished to see him.

"I am sorry that I have no news for you, Mr. Thorndyke," the officer said, when he called upon him. "Every place where such a man would be likely to be in hiding has been searched, and no clew whatever has been obtained. We shall now circulate notices of the reward throughout the country. If the man was at all severely hit, we may assume that he must be somewhere in the neighborhood of London, whereas, if the wound was a slight one, he might be able to go a long distance, and may be now in York, for aught we know. However, now that the search in London has terminated, I can really see no use in your staying here any longer; we will let you know directly we have any news."

Three months later John Thorndyke received a letter from the Detective Office asking him to call the next

time he came up to town, as although no news had been obtained that would lead to the man's immediate arrest, news, had, at any rate, been obtained showing that he was alive. It happened that Mark was intending to go up on the following day, and his father asked him to call for him at Bow Street.

"Well, Mr. Thorndyke, we have heard about your man, and that after we had quite abandoned the search. I had come to the conclusion that the wound you gave him had been a fatal one, and that he had been quietly buried by some of the people with whom he was connected. The discovery was, as half these discoveries generally are, the result of accident. Last week a gentleman entered the Bank and asked for change in gold for a fifty-pound note. The cashier, looking at the number, found that it was one of those that had been stolen from a passenger by one of the south coaches several months ago. The gentleman was at once taken into a private office, and questioned as to how he had obtained the note. The account that he gave was that he was a surgeon in practice at Southampton. A gentleman had arrived there on a date which we found to be the day after that on which you were stopped; he was well-dressed, and had the air of a gentleman; he had come down by coach, and was evidently very ill. He told the surgeon that he had been engaged in a duel, that the pistols had been discharged simultaneously, and that he had killed his man, but had himself been severely wounded. He said that the person whom he had killed had influential connections, and that it would be necessary for him to remain in seclusion for a time, and he asked him to take charge of his case, as he had ample means of paying him handsomely. The surgeon examined the wound, and found it to be indeed a serious one, and, as he thought, probably fatal. However, having no doubt as to the truth of the story, he had taken the gentleman in, and he remained under his charge until a week before he came up to town.

"For the first month he had been dangerously ill, but he completely recovered. The surgeon had no reason whatever for doubting his patient being a gentleman; he was fashionably dressed, and had evidently changed

his clothes after the duel, as there were no bloodstains upon them. He was, however, glad when he left, as his conversation did not please him from its cynical tone. The Bank sent to us directly the man presented the note, which he stated had been given to him in part payment for his medical services and the board and lodging of the patient; the total amount had been £75, and the balance was paid in gold. As he was able to give several good references, and was identified by three gentlemen, he was, of course, released. I have no doubt whatever that the fellow he attended was your man. The surgeon said, whoever he was, he must have been a man of iron resolution to have made such a journey in the state he was.

"No doubt he must have ridden straight to the place he used as his headquarters, where he had his wound roughly bandaged, changed his clothes, and had ridden in the morning to some point that the coach passed on its way to Southampton. Of course we obtained a minute description from the surgeon of the man's appearance. We found that the people at the coach-office had no remembrance of there being anyone answering to that description among the persons who traveled by the coach, but of course that would not go for much, for over three months have elapsed.

"When the coachman who had driven the down coach that day came up to town, we saw him, and he remembered perfectly that on or about that day he had picked up a passenger at Kingston—a gentleman who was in very weak health. There were only three inside passengers besides himself, and he had to be assisted into the coach. The way-bill, on being turned up, showed that an inside passenger had been taken up at Kingston. I have already sent down men to make inquiries at every village in the district between Reigate and Kingston, and I trust that we shall lay hands on him, especially now we have got an accurate description of him, while before we were working in the dark in that respect."

"What is the description, sir? My father is much interested on that point, for, as I believe I told you, he has a strong suspicion that the fellow is the man who

was transported more than eight years ago to Australia, and who made his escape from the prison there."

"Yes, I know. At first it appeared to me very improbable, but I am bound to say the description tallies very closely with that given of him. The surgeon took him to be nearly thirty; but after what he has gone through he may well look three or four years older than he is. He had light hair, rather small gray eyes, and a face that would have been good-looking had it not been for its supercilious and sneering expression."

"I can remember him," Mark said; "and that answers very closely to him. I should say that it is certainly Bastow, and my father made no mistake when he asserted that he recognized his voice."

The officer added a note to the description in his register: "Strongly suspected of being Arthur Bastow, transported for connivance with highwaymen; was leader of a mutiny in convict jail of Sydney two years and a half ago. Made his escape."

"There is no doubt," he went on, "that he is a desperate character. No doubt he is the man who has been concerned in most of these robberies in the southern suburbs. We must get hold of him if we can, and once we do so there will be an end of his travels, for the mutiny in prison and escape is a hanging business, putting aside the affairs since he got back. Well, sir, I hope he will give you and your father no more trouble."

"I am sure I hope so," Mark said. "I suppose that the fellow who was shot was one of the men who escaped with him from the convict prison."

"That is likely enough. Two would get home as easily as one, and the fact that they were both strangers here would account for the difficulty our men have had in their search for him. You see, we have had nothing whatever to go on. You must not be too sanguine about our catching the man in a short time: he is evidently a clever fellow, and I think it likely that once he got back he lost no time in getting away from this part of the country, and we are more likely to find him in the west or north than we are of laying hands on him here. We will send descriptions all over the country, and as soon

as I hear of a series of crimes anywhere, I will send off two of my best men to help the local constables."

On his return home Mark told his father what he had done.

"I thought that I could not have been mistaken, Mark; we have got that rascal on our hands again. I hope now that they have got a description of him to go by, they will not be long before they catch him; but the way he escaped after being badly wounded shows that he is full of resources, and he may give them some trouble yet, if I am not mistaken. At any rate, I will have a talk with the Reigate constable, and tell him that there is very little doubt that the man who attacked us was Arthur Bastow, who has, as we have heard, escaped from Botany Bay, and that he had best tell his men to keep a sharp lookout for him, for that, owing to his animosity against us for his former capture and conviction, it is likely enough that sooner or later he will be in this neighborhood again. After his determined attempt at my life when pretending to rob us, I shall certainly not feel comfortable until I know that he is under lock and key."

"I wish, Guardy, you would give up this magistrate's business," Millicent said at dinner. "I am sure that it is worrying you, and I can't see why you should go on with it."

"It does not worry me, as a rule, Millicent; indeed, I like the duty. Besides, every landowner of standing ought to take his share in public work. There are only two of the magistrates younger than I am, and whatever you may think of me, I feel myself capable of doing what work there is to do. When Mark gets a few years older I shall resign, and let him take my place on the bench. I own, though, that I should be glad if these highway robberies could be suppressed. Poaching and the ordinary offenses of drunkenness and assaults are disposed of without any trouble; but this stopping of the coaches, accompanied occasionally by the shooting of the coachman or guard, gives a great deal of trouble, and the worst of it is that we are practically powerless to put such crimes down. Nothing short of patrolling the roads in parties of three or four between sunset and sunrise would

put a stop to them, and the funds at our disposal would not support such an expenditure."

"It is a pity that you cannot get up a corps like the yeomanry, and call it the Mounted Constabulary," said Mark. "There are at least a dozen fellows I know who would, like myself, be glad to join it, and I dare say we could get a score of young farmers or farmers' sons."

"It is not a bad idea, Mark, and I dare say that for a time the duty would be zealously performed, but before very long you would tire of it. A few wet nights or winter's cold, and you would cease to see the fun of it, especially as you may be sure that the news that the roads are well patrolled would soon come to the ears of these scoundrels, and they would cease to work in the district."

"Perhaps you are right, sir; but I think that a few of us would stick to it."

"Perhaps so, Mark, but I should be sorry to wager that the work would be thoroughly done. The first county or hunt ball, or even dinner-party, more than half of them would be away. I don't say that you personally might not for some considerable time persist in patrolling the roads, for you have a sort of personal interest in the matter; but I would wager that before two months have passed you would find you were the only one who attended at the rendezvous regularly."

A fortnight later the party were seated round the fire in the dusk. Mr. Bastow was sitting next to the Squire, and was in unusually good spirits. He had heard no word of what the Squire had discovered, nor dreamed that his son was again in England, still less that he was suspected of being one of the men who had endeavored to stop the Squire and his son on their drive from London. Suddenly there was the crack of a pistol outside, and a ball passed between him and the Squire. Without a word, Mark Thorndyke rushed to the door, seized a pistol from his riding-coat, and, snatching up a heavy whip, dashed out into the garden.

He was just in time to see a figure running at full speed, and he set off in pursuit. Good runner as he was, he gained but slightly at first, but after a time he drew nearer to the fugitive. The latter was but some sixty

yards away when he leaped a hedge into a narrow lane. Mark followed without hesitation, but as he leaped into the road he heard a jeering laugh and the sharp sound of a horse's hoofs, and knew that the man he was pursuing had gained his horse and made off. Disgusted at his failure, he went slowly back to the house. The shutters had been put up.

"I have lost him, father. He ran well to begin with, but I was gaining fast on him when he leaped into a narrow lane where he had left his horse, and rode off before I could get up to him. I need hardly say that there was no use attempting to follow on foot. He missed you all, did he not?"

"Yes, Mark. It is not so easy to take an accurate aim when it is nearly dark. The bullet passed between myself and Mr. Bastow, and has buried itself in the mantelpiece."

"Something ought to be done, Guardy," Millicent Conyers said indignantly. "It is shameful that people cannot sit in their own room without the risk of being shot at. What can it mean? Surely no one can have any enmity against you."

"I hope not, my dear," John Thorndyke said lightly. "Some of the fellows we have sentenced may think that we were rather hard on them, but I do not think that any of them would feel it sufficiently to attempt to murder one; besides, Mark says that the fellow had a horse waiting for him, and none of our poachers would be likely to be the owner of a horse. It may be that the highwayman Mark shot at and wounded has come down to give us a fright. It is no use worrying about it now; in future we will have the shutters closed at sunset. It is hardly likely that the thing will be attempted again, and Mark's chase must have shown the fellow that the game is hardly worth the risk."

"He might have shot you, Mark; you had no right to risk your life in that sort of way," the girl said to him later, as they were seated together in front of the fire, while the Squire was reading the *Gazette* at the table, Mrs. Cunningham was working, and Mr. Bastow, who had been greatly shaken by the event, had retired to

bed. "Do you think that he really meant to kill your father?"

"I should imagine he did; a man would hardly run the risk of being hung merely for the pleasure of shooting. I would give a good deal if I had caught him, or better still, if I had shot him," said Mark. "However, I will make it my business to hunt the fellow down. After this evening's affair, we shall never feel comfortable until he is caught. I have no doubt that he is the fellow we have been hunting for the last four months. The people at Bow Street seem no good whatever; I will try if I cannot succeed better."

"Don't do anything rash, Mark," said Millicent, in a low voice; "you have no right to put yourself in danger."

"But our lives are in danger now, Millicent—in much greater danger than mine would be when looking out for him. But there seems no guarding against attacks like this; I mean to hunt him down, if it takes me a year. I have nothing special to do, and cannot employ my time more usefully."

When the ladies went up to bed the Squire said:

"Come into the library, Mark, and we will smoke a pipe, and have a talk over this business." He touched the bell. "Have you got a good fire in the library, Ramoo?"

"Yes, sahîb, very good."

"Then take a bottle of number one bin of port there and a couple of glasses."

When they were quietly seated, glasses filled, and the long pipes alight, the Squire said: "I want to have a serious talk with you, Mark. What I am going to say will surprise you a good deal. I had not intended to tell you for another four years—that is to say, not until Millicent came of age—but after that affair to-night, I feel that my life is so uncertain that I ought not to delay letting you know the truth. I suppose you agree with me that it was Bastow who shot at me this evening?"

"I have not the least doubt about that, father."

"I will not say that he shot at me," the Squire said, "for he may have shot at his father; the villain is quite

capable of that. It was his father who brought me upon him, and though I effected his capture eight years ago I don't suppose he cared which of us he killed. However, the point is not what he aimed at, but whether it was he, and that I take there is no doubt about. He missed me this time, but his next shot may be more successful. At any rate, I think that it is high time that I told you the story."

And, beginning with the arrival of Colonel Thorndyke at his place, he repeated the conversation that he had had with him. Several times in the early portion of his narrative he was interrupted by exclamations of surprise from his son.

"Then Millicent is really my uncle's heiress!" exclaimed Mark, when he heard the request the Colonel had made of the Squire.

"That is so, Mark. She does not know it herself, and it was my brother's urgent wish that she should not know it until she came of age or until she married. I fought against it to the utmost, but it was his dying prayer, and I could not refuse it. My solicitor knows the facts of the matter, and so does Mrs. Cunningham, who brought Millicent over from India when she was only about a year old. I may say that I especially urged that it would not be fair to you to be brought up to consider yourself to be heir to the property, but he said:

"Putting aside the estate, I have a considerable fortune. In the first place, there are the accumulations of rent from the Reigate place. I have never touched them, and they have been going on for twelve years. In the next place, the shaking of the pagoda tree has gone on merrily, and we all made a comfortable pile. Then I always made a point of carrying about with me two or three hundred pounds, and after the sacking of some of the palaces I could pick up jewels and things from the troops for a trifle, being able to pay money down. Even without the rents here, I have some £50,000 in money. I should think the jewels would be worth at least as much more, irrespective of a diamond bracelet which is, I fancy, worth more than the rest put together. It was stolen from the arm of some idol." He then explained how he

got it, and the manner in which he had placed it and the rest of his wealth in a secure position.

"Things stolen from a god are frightfully dangerous," he said, "for the Brahmins or priests connected with the temples have been known to follow them up for years, and in nine cases out of ten they get possession of them again. Murder in such a case is meritorious, and I would not have them in the house here, were they ten times the value they are. I know that my clothes, my drawers, and everything belonging to me have been gone through at night a score of times. Nothing has been stolen, but, being a methodical man, I could generally see some displacement in the things that told me they had been disturbed. They gave it up for a time, but I haven't a shadow of a doubt that they have been watching me ever since, and they may be watching me now, for anything I know. Now, half of that fortune I have left by my will to your son; half to the girl. I will tell you where the things are the last thing before I die.

"Now, mind, you must be careful when you get them. When I am dead you are almost certain to be watched. You don't know what these fellows are. The things must remain where they are until your boy comes of age. Don't let him keep those diamonds an hour in his possession; let him pass them away privately to some man in whom he has implicit confidence, for him to take them to a jeweler's; let him double and turn and disguise himself so as to throw everyone that may be spying on him off his track. If you can manage it, the best way would be to carry them over to Amsterdam, and sell them there."

"I confess it seemed absurd, but it is a matter about which he would know a great deal more than I do, and he was convinced that not only was he watched, but that he owed his life simply to the fact that the fellows did not know where the diamonds were hidden, and that by killing him they would have lost every chance of regaining them.

"So convinced was he of all this, that he would not tell me where he had stowed them away; he seemed to think that the very walls would hear us, and that these fellows might be hidden under the sofa, in a cupboard, or

up the chimney, for aught I know. He told me that he would tell me the secret before he died; but death came so suddenly that he never had an opportunity of doing so. He made a tremendous effort in his last moment, but failed, and I shall never forget the anguish his face expressed when he found himself powerless to speak; however, he pressed his snuffbox into my hand with such a significant look that, being certain it contained some clew to the mystery, and being unable to find a hidden spring or a receptacle, I broke it open that night.

"It contained a false bottom, and here are what I found in it. I stowed them away in a secret drawer in that old cabinet that stands by my bedside. It is in the bottom pigeonhole on the right-hand side. I bought the cabinet at a sale, and found the spring of the secret drawer quite accidentally. I shall put the things back to-night, and you will know where to look for them. You press against the bottom and up against the top simultaneously, and the back then falls forward. The opening behind is very shallow, and will hold but two or three letters. But, however, it sufficed for this;" and he handed Mark the coin and slip of paper.

"But what are these, father?"

"These are the clews by which we are to obtain the treasure."

As Mark examined them carefully the Squire stood up with his back to the fire, and looking round walked to the door and said:

"I thought there was a draught somewhere; either Ramoo did not shut the door when he went out or it has come open again. It has done that once or twice before. When I go into town to-morrow I will tell Tucker to send a man up to take the lock off. Well, what do you make out of that?"

"I can make out nothing," Mark replied. "No doubt the coin is something to be given to whoever is in charge of the treasure, and Masulipatam may be the place where it is hidden."

"Yes, or it may be a password. It reminds one of the forty thieves business. You go and knock at the door of a cave, a figure armed to the teeth presents itself,

you whisper in his ear 'Masulipatam,' he replies 'Madras,' or 'Calcutta,' or something of that sort, you take out the coin and show it to him, he takes out from some hidden repository a similar one, compares the two, and then leads you to an inner cave piled up with jewels."

Mark laughed.

"Well, it is no laughing matter, Mark," the Squire went on seriously. "The little comedy may not be played just as I have sketched it, but I expect that it is something of the kind. That coin has to be shown, and the word 'Masulipatam' spoken to the guardian, whoever he may be, of your uncle's treasure. But who that guardian may be or how he is to be found is a mystery. I myself have never tried to solve it. There was nothing whatever to go upon. The things may be in England or, it may be, anywhere in India. To me it looked an absolutely hopeless business to set about. I did not see how even a first step was to be taken, and as I had this estate and you and Millicent to look after, and was no longer a young man, I put the matter aside altogether. You are young, you have plenty of energy, and you have your life before you, and it is a matter of the greatest interest to you.

"Possibly—very improbably, mind, still possibly—when Millicent comes of age and learns who she is, Mrs. Cunningham may be able to help you. I have no idea whether it is so. I have never spoken to her about this treasure of George's, but it is just possible that while he was in town before he came down to me he may have given her some instructions concerning it. Of course he intended to give me full particulars, but he could hardly have avoided seeing that, in the event of my death, perhaps suddenly before the time came for seeking the treasure, the secret would be lost altogether. Whether he has told her or his lawyer or not I cannot say, but I have all along clung to the hope that he took some such natural precaution. Unless that treasure is discovered, the only thing that will come to you is the half of the accumulated rents of this estate during the ten years between my father's death and George's; these rents were paid to our solicitors, and by them invested.

"The rentals amount to about £2500 a year, and of course there is interest to be added, so that I suppose there is now some £25,000, for I had out £2000 when I came here, to set matters straight. I had a great fight with the lawyers over it, but as I pointed out they had failed altogether to see that the agent did his duty, and that at least a couple of hundred a year ought to be expended in necessary repairs, I had a right to at least that sum to carry out the work that ought to be done from year to year. In addition to that sum I laid out about £1000 a year for the first three years I was here; so that practically £5000 was expended in rebuilding the village and doing repairs on the homesteads; that, however, is not the point now. Altogether, then, there is some £25,000 to be divided between you and Millicent when she becomes mistress of this property.

"According to the terms of my brother's will, I am still to remain here until she marries; when she does so I shall, of course, go back to my own little place; the income of that has been accumulating while I have been here, my only expenses having been for clothes. I have taken nothing out of this estate since I came here, and each year have paid to the solicitors all balances remaining after discharging the household expenses, these balances averaging £700 or £800 a year. Of course the income was absolutely left to me during the time I remained ostensible owner, but I had no wish to make money out of a trust that I assumed greatly against my will. That money is Millicent's; of course the house had to be kept up in proper style whether I were here or not. Had she at once come into possession, there must have been horses, and carriages, and so on. I don't say that I have not had all the expenses of our living saved; that I had no objection to; but I was determined at least not to take a penny out of the estate beyond those expenses. You see, Mark, you will have your £12,500 anyhow, as soon as Millicent comes of age—not a bad little sum—so that even if you never hear anything more of this mysterious treasure you will not be penniless, or in anyway dependent upon me. At my death, of course, you will come into the Sussex place, with what savings there may be."

"I am sure I have no reason to grumble, father," Mark said heartily. "Of course it came upon me at first as a surprise that Millicent was the heiress here, and it flashed through my mind for the moment that the best thing would be to take a commission in the army, or to follow my uncle's example, and get a cadetship in the Company's service. I have no doubt that I should have enjoyed life either way quite as much or possibly more than if I had gone on a good many years as heir to these estates, and afterwards as Squire. Of course, now I shall make it my business to see if it is possible to obtain some sort of clew to this treasure, and then follow it up; but the first thing to which I shall give my mind will be to hunt down Bastow. We shall never feel safe here as long as that fellow is alive, and that will be the first thing I shall devote myself to. After that I shall see about the treasure."

"As to that, Mark, I cannot impress upon you too strongly what your uncle said. It may, of course, be a pure delusion on his part; but if he is right, and some of these Hindoo fellows are still on the watch to obtain that bracelet, you must use extraordinary precautions when you get it into your hands; he advised me to take it across to Amsterdam, and either get the stones recut or to sell them separately to different diamond merchants there. He said that my life would not be worth an hour's purchase as long as the stones were in my hands."

"That rather looks, father, as if the things were somewhere in England; had they been in India, you would have had them some months in your hands before you could get them to Amsterdam."

"I did not think of that before, Mark, and it is possible that you are right; but I don't know; he might have thought that it would be impossible for me to dispose of them at Madras or Calcutta, and may have assumed that I should at once deposit them in a bank to be forwarded with other treasure to England, or that I should get them packed away in the treasure safe in the ship I came back by, and that I should not really have them on my person till I landed in England, or until I took them from the Bank. Still, I see that your suppo-

sition is the most likely, and that they may all this time have been lying somewhere in London until I should present myself with a gold coin and the word 'Masulipatam.'"

Suddenly Mark sprang to his feet, and pulled back the curtains across a window, threw it up, and leaped into the garden, and there stood listening for two or three minutes, with his pistol cocked in his hand. He stepped for a moment into the room again.

"You had better put that light out, father, or we may have another shot."

"Did you hear anything, Mark?"

"I thought I did, father. I may have been mistaken, but I certainly thought I heard a noise, and when I pulled the curtains aside the window was not shut by three or four inches. I will have a look through the shrubbery. That fellow may have come back again. Pull the curtains to after me."

"I will go with you, Mark."

"I would rather you didn't, father; it would only make me nervous. I shan't go into the shrubbery and give them a chance of getting first shot. I shall hide up somewhere and listen. It is a still night, and if there is anyone moving I am pretty sure to hear him."

The Squire turned down the lamp, drew the curtains, and seated himself by the fire. It was three-quarters of an hour before Mark returned. He shut the window, and fastened it carefully.

"I fancy you must have been mistaken, Mark."

"I suppose that shot through the window has made me nervous. I certainly did fancy I heard a noise there; it may have been a dead bough snapping, or something of that sort; and of course, the window being partly open, even though only three or four inches, any little noise would come in more plainly than it otherwise would do. However, everything has been perfectly quiet since I went out, and it is hardly likely indeed that the fellow would have returned so soon after the hot chase I gave him."

"It is very stupid—the window being left open," the Squire said. "I shall question Martha about it in the

morning; it was her duty to see that it was shut and fastened before drawing the curtains. Just at present one can scarcely be too careful. I don't mean to deny that whether there was a window open or not a burglar who wanted to get into the house could do so, still there is no use in making their work more easy for them. I know, as a rule, we are careless about such things; there has not been a burglary in this part for years, and until lately the front door has never been locked at night, and anyone could have walked in who wanted to. Of course the servants don't know that there is any reason for being more careful at present than usual.

"I was thinking the other day of having shutters put to all these downstairs rooms. Some of them have got them, and some have not; still, even with shutters, burglars can always get in if they want to do so. They have only to cut round the lock of a door or to make a hole in a panel to give them room to put an arm through and draw back a bolt, and the thing is done. I know that all the silver is locked up every night in the safe, for Ramoo sees to that, and I have never known him neglect anything under his charge. Well, Mark, I don't know that it is any use sitting up longer, we have plenty of time to talk the matter over; it is four years yet before Millicent comes of age, though, of course, there is nothing to prevent your setting out in quest of the treasure as soon as you like. Still, there is no hurry about it."

"None whatever, father; but I don't mean to lose a day before I try to get on the track of that villain Bastow."

CHAPTER VIII.

MARK was some hours before he went to sleep. The news that he had heard that evening was strange and startling. Full of health and strength, the fact that he was not, as he had always supposed, the heir to the estate troubled him not at all. The fact that in four years he would come in for some twelve thousand pounds was sufficient to prevent his feeling any uneasiness as to his future; and indeed in some respects it was not an unpleasant idea that, instead of being tied down to the estate, he should be able to wander at will, visit foreign countries, and make his own life.

In one respect he was sorry. His father had in the last year hinted more than once that it would be a very nice arrangement if he were to make up a match with his ward; he had laughed, and said that there would be plenty of time for that yet. But the idea had been an agreeable one. He was very fond of Millicent—fond, perhaps, in a cousinly way at present; but at any rate he liked her far better than any of the sisters of his friends. Of course she was only seventeen yet, and there was plenty of time to think of marriage in another three years. Still, the thought occurred to him several times that she was budding out into a young woman, and every month added to her attractions. It was but the day before he had said to himself that there was no reason to wait as long as three years, especially as his father seemed anxious, and would evidently be glad were the match to take place. Now, of course, he said to himself, that was at an end.

He had never given her any reason to suppose that he cared for her, and now that she was the heiress and he comparatively poor, she would naturally think that it was for the estate, and not for herself, that she was wooed.