in to-morrow you shall have my answer. We are always glad to have a new hand in the force, for the faces of our men are so well-known among the criminal class that they are liable to be detected even under the cleverest disguises. There is work, too, upon which it is absolutely necessary that a gentleman should be employed, and in the event of your joining us, I should wish you to keep the matter strictly from all your acquaintances; and it would certainly be advantageous that you should, when disengaged, continue to mix with your friends and to mingle in society of all kinds as freely as possible. There is crime among the upper classes as well as among the lower, though of a different type; and as Mr. Thorndyke of Crowswood you would have far better opportunities of investigating some of these cases than any of my men would have. You would not object to take up such cases?"

"Not at all, sir; that is, if it could be arranged that I should not do the actual work of making an arrest, or have to appear in court as a witness."

"That could be managed," the chief said. "When you have got to a certain point the matter of the final arrest could always be handed over to someone else, but as a rule we keep our officers in the background as much as possible, because at every trial the court is half-full of men of the criminal class, and the faces of our men would soon be known to every one of them. Well, if you will call about ten o'clock to-morrow you shall have my answer; but I should advise you to think the matter well over before you see me again. The responsibilities as well as the dangers are great, and indeed in some of the work you would literally have to carry your life in your hand; and I can assure you that the task you would undertake is by no means a light one."

CHAPTER XI.

MARK called that evening, as he had promised, upon Mrs. Cunningham.

"I hope that you feel all the better for your day's rest, Millicent," he said.

The girl looked quickly at him to see if there was any sarcasm in the question, but it was evident that the inquiry was made in earnest.

"Yes, I feel better now," she said. "I have dozed a good deal to-day. I did not feel up to anything. Mrs. Cunningham's work has progressed wonderfully. I should say that she has done more to-day than she ordinarily finds time to do in a week. What have you been doing with yourself?"

"I have been having a long talk with Mr. Prendergast about the lost treasure."

"And of course he said that you would never find it, Mark?"

"Well, yes, he distinctly expressed that opinion."

"And afterwards?"

"Afterwards I went to Bow Street and had a long talk also with the chief officer there."

"I don't like the idea of your searching for this man, Mark. In the first place, I don't see why you should hope to succeed when the men whose business it is to do such work have failed. In the next place, I think that you may get into serious danger."

"That I must risk, Millicent. I have already proved a better shot than he is, and I am quite ready to take my chance if I can but come upon him; that is the difficult part of the matter. I know that I shall need patience, but I have plenty of time before me, and have great hopes that I shall run him to earth at last."

"But you would not know him if you saw him?"

"I think I should," Mark said quietly; "at least, if he is the man that I suspect."

"Then you do suspect someone?" Mrs. Cunningham said, laying down her work.

"Yes, I know of no reason why you should not know it now. I suspect—indeed, I feel morally certain—that the man who murdered my father was Arthur Bastow."

An exclamation of surprise broke from both his hearers, and they listened with horror while he detailed the various grounds that he had for his suspicions. They were silent for some time after he had brought his narrative to a conclusion, then Mrs. Cunningham said:

"What a merciful release for Mr. Bastow that he should have died before this terrible thing came out! For after what you have told us I can hardly doubt that you are right, and that it is this wicked man who is guilty."

"Yes, it was indeed providental," Mark said, "though I think that, feeble as he has been for some months, it might have been kept from him. Still, a word from a chance visitor, who did not associate Bastow the murderer with our dear old friend, might have enlightened him, and the blow would have been a terrible one indeed. It is true that, as it was, he died from the shock, but he did not know the hand that struck the blow."

"Now that you have told me this," Millicent said, "I cannot blame you, Mark, for determining to hunt the man down. It seems even worse than it did before; it is awful to think that anyone could cherish revenge like that. Now tell me how you are going to set about it."

"I have promised the chief officer that I will tell absolutely no one," he said. "I have a plan, and I believe that in time it must be successful. I know well enough that I could tell you both of it without any fear of its going further, but he asked me to promise, and I did so without reservation; moreover, I think that for some reasons it is as well that even you should not know it. As it is, you are aware that I am going to try, and that is all. If I were to tell you how, you might be picturing all sorts of imaginary dangers and worrying yourself over it, so I think that it will be much the best that you should remain in ignorance, at any rate for a time. I can say this, that I

shall for the present remain principally in London, and I think that I am more likely to come upon a clew here than elsewhere."

Millicent pouted, but Mrs. Cunningham said:

"I think, perhaps, that you are right, Mark, and it is better that we should know nothing about it; we shall know that you are looking for a clew, but of course no danger can arise until you obtain it and attempt to arrest him. I feel sure that you will do nothing rash, especially as if any harm befell you he might escape unpunished, and therefore that when the time comes to seize him you will obtain such help as may be necessary, and will, if possible, arrest him at a moment when resistance is impossible."

"Thank you, Mrs. Cunningham; I shall certainly spare no efforts in taking him that way, and would far rather he met his fate on a gibbet than by a bullet from my pistol."

"I agree with you, Mark," Millicent said; "even hanging is too good for such a wicked man. When are you going to set about it?"

"I hope to be able to begin to-morrow," he said. "I am impatient to be at work, even though I know perfectly well that it may be months before I can get on his track. I hope to get a good deal of information as to the habits of men of his kind from the Bow Street runners, and I have an appointment to-morrow morning to see their chief, who will give me every assistance in his power."

"Then you will not be able to take us out?" Millicent said.

"I trust to do so later on, but I cannot say how long I shall be engaged. However, I hope to get away so as to go out with you after lunch, and may possibly be able to postpone my getting regularly to work until after you have gone, so as to be able to devote myself to your service."

"But what sort of work? I cannot make out how you are going to begin."

"I can tell you this much, that to begin with I shall go in company with a constable to various places where such a man is likely to be found. It will take some time to acquaint myself with all these localities; the next step

will be to find out, if possible, if anyone at all answering to his description is in the habit of coming there occasionally, and whom he visits; another thing will be to find out the places where receivers of stolen goods do their business, and to watch those with whom highwaymen are suspected of having dealings. All this, you see, will entail a lot of work, and require a very large amount of patience. Of course, if nothing whatever comes of such inquiries, I shall have to try quiet places in the suburbs; you must remember that this fellow during his time as a convict must have had opportunities of getting a vast amount of information likely to be useful to him, such as the addresses of men holding positions of apparent respectability, and yet in alliance with thieves. You may be sure that when he returned he took every imaginable pains to obtain a safe place of concealment before he began his work; my own opinion is that I am more likely to find him living quietly in a suburban cottage than in a London slum."

Millicent was now thoroughly interested in the search.

"It seems a great business, Mark, but going into it as thoroughly as you are doing I feel sure that you will succeed. I only wish that I could help you; but I could not do that, could I?" she asked wistfully.

He saw that she was in earnest, and suppressed all semblance of a smile.

"I am afraid, dear, that you would be a much greater source of embarrassment than of assistance to me," he said gravely. "This is essentially not a woman's work. I believe that women are sometimes employed in the detection of what we may call domestic crimes, but this is a different matter altogether."

"I suppose so," she sighed; "but it will be very hard to be taking our ease down at Weymouth while we know that you are, day after day, wearing yourself out in tramping about making inquiries."

"It will be no more fatiguing than tramping through the stubble round Crowswood after partridges, which I should probably be doing now if I were down there. By the way, before you go we shall have to talk over the question of shutting up the house. We had too much to

think of to go into that before we came away, and I suppose I shall have to run down and arrange it all, if you have quite made up your mind that you don't mean to return for a year or two."

"Decidedly our present idea is to have a few weeks at Weymouth, and then when we feel braced up to come back here and look for a house. Where are you likely to be, Mark?" Mrs. Cunningham asked.

"I shall consult with Dick Chetwynd; he knows the town thoroughly, and is more up here than he is down in the country; he will recommend me to some lodging in a street that, without being the height of fashion, is at least passable. I have not the least wish to become a regular man about town, but I should like to go into good society. One cannot be at work incessantly."

The next morning the chief of the detective department told Mark that he had decided to accept his offer.

"As you will receive no pay," he said, "I shall regard you as a sort of volunteer. For the first two or three months you will spend your time in going about with one or other of my men on his work. They will be able to put you up to disguises. When you have once learned to know all the thieves' quarters and the most notorious receivers of stolen goods, you will be able to go about your work on your own account. All that I require is that you shall report yourself here twice a day. Should I have on hand any business for which you may appear to me particularly well suited, I shall request you to at once undertake it, and from time to time, when there is a good deal of business on hand, I may get you to aid one of my men who may require an assistant in the job on which he is engaged."

"I am sure I am very much obliged to you, sir," Mark said, "and will, I can assure you, do my best in every way to assist your men in any business in which they may be engaged."

"When will you begin?"

"It is Saturday to-day, sir. I think I will postpone setting to until Monday week. My cousin and the lady in whose charge she is came up with me on Thursday, and will be leaving town the end of next week, and I should

wish to escort them about while here. I will come on Monday morning ready for work. How had I better be dressed?"

"I should say as a countryman. A convenient character for you to begin with will be that of a man who, having got into a poaching fray, and hurt a gamekeeper, has made for London as the best hiding-place. You are quite uncertain about your future movements, but you are thinking of enlisting."

"Very well, sir, I will get the constable at Reigate, who knows me well, to send me a suit. I might find it difficult to get all the things I want here."

Accordingly, for the next week Mark devoted himself to the ladies. Millicent, in her interest in the work that he was about to undertake, had now quite got over her fit of ill-temper, and the old cordial relations were renewed. On the Friday he saw them into the Weymouth coach, then sauntered off to his friend Chetwynd's lodgings.

Ramoo had already sailed. On his arrival in town he had said that he should, if possible, arrange to go out as a steward. "Many men of my color who have come over here with their masters go back in that way," he said, in answer to Mark's remonstrances. "It is much more comfortable that way than as a passenger. If you go third-class, rough fellows laugh and mock; if you go second-class, men look as much as to say, 'What is that colored fellow doing here? This is no place for him.' Much better go as steward; not very hard work; very comfortable; plenty to eat; no one laugh or make fun."

"Well, perhaps it would be best, when one comes to think of it, Ramoo; but I would gladly pay your passage in any class you like."

"Ramoo go his own way, sahib," he said. "No pay passage money; me go to docks where boats are sailing, go on board and see head steward. Head steward glad enough to take good servant who is willing to work his way out, and ask for no wages. Head steward draw wages for him, and put wages in his own pocket. He very well satisfied."

On Wednesday he came and told Mark that he had arranged to sail in the *Nabob*, and was to go on board

early the next morning. He seemed a great deal affected, and Mark and Millicent were equally sorry to part with the faithful fellow.

"Well, old man," Dick Chetwynd said, when Mark entered the room, where he was still at breakfast, "I was beginning to wonder whether you had gone to Reigate. Why, when I saw you last Friday you told me that you would look me up in a day or two."

"I have been busy showing London to Mrs. Cunningham and Miss Conyers," he replied—for Millicent had insisted on keeping her former name, at any rate for the present—and Mark was somewhat glad that there had been no necessity for entering into any explanations. It was agreed that when he went down to discharge some of the servants and called upon his friends he should say nothing of the change in his position, but should assign as a motive that he intended to travel about for a long time, and that he felt he could not settle down in the lonely house, at any rate for two or three years, and therefore intended to diminish the establishment.

"You will have some breakfast, Mark?"

"No, thank you. I breakfasted two hours ago."

"Then you still keep to your intention to stay in London for a while?"

"Yes. I don't feel that I could bear the house alone," Mark replied. "You see, Mrs. Cunningham and my uncle's ward could not very well remain in a bachelor's home, and naturally, after what has happened, they would not like to do so, even if they could. They have gone down to Weymouth for a few weeks for a complete change; and Mrs. Cunningham talks of taking a house in town for a time. I am going to look for lodgings, and I want your advice as to the quarter likely to suit me."

"Why not take up your abode here for a time? There is a vacant room, and I should be very glad to have you with me."

"Thank you very much, Dick, but I should prefer being alone. You will have friends dropping in to see you, and at present I should be poor company. It will be some little time before I shall feel equal to society."

"Of course, Mark. I always speak first and think after-

wards, as you know pretty well by this time. Well, what sort of lodgings do you want?"

"I want them to be in a good but not in a thoroughly fashionable street. In time, no doubt, I shall like a little society, and shall get you to introduce me to some of the quieter of your friends, and so gradually feel my way."

"I will do all that sort of thing for you, Mark. As you know, I am not one of those who see much fun in gambling or drinking, though one must play a little to be in the fashion. Still, I never go heavily into it. I risk a few guineas and then leave it. My own inclinations lie rather towards sport, and in this I can indulge without being out of the fashion. All the tip-top people now patronize the ring, and I do so in my small way too. I am on good terms with all the principal prizefighters, and put on the gloves with one or other of them pretty nearly every day. I have taken courses of lessons regularly from four or five of them, and I can tell you that I can hold my own with most of the Corinthians. It is a grand sport, anl I don't know how I should get on without it; after the hard exercise I was accustomed to down in the country, it keeps one's muscles in splendid order, and I can tell you that if one happens to get into a fight in the streets, it is no light thing to be able to polish off an antagonist in a round or two without getting a mark on your face that would keep you a prisoner in your room for a week or more."

"Yes, I should like very much to take lessons too, Dick; it is one of the things that I have always wished to do. I suppose one can do it of an evening, or any time you like?"

"Yes, any hour suits those fellows. You ought to get either a heavy middleweight or a light heavyweight; you will be a heavyweight yourself by the time you have filled out. Let me think; what is your height—six feet one, if I remember rightly?"

"Yes, that is about it."

"Well, with your shoulders and long reach and activity, you ought to be something out of the way if you take pains, Mark. You see, I am barely five feet ten, and am

something like two stone lighter than you are. I suppose you are not much under twelve stone and a half."

"That is just about my weight; I weighed at the miller's only a fortnight ago."

"Good. I will make some inquiries, and see who would be the best man to take you in hand to begin with. And now about lodgings. Well, I should say Essex Street, or any of those streets running down from the Strand, would suit you. The rooms in Essex Street are bigger than those in Buckingham Street, and you will find anything between the two in some of the others. I may as well saunter round there with you. Of course money is no object to you?"

"No," Mark agreed, "but I don't want big rooms. I think a small one, when you are sitting by yourself, is more cozy and comfortable."

Finally two rooms were taken in Villiers Street; they were of moderate size and handsomely furnished: the last tenant had fitted them out for himself, but had lived to enjoy them only three months, having at the end of that time been killed in a duel over a quarrel at cards.

"Well, I think you are in luck, Mark; you might look through a good many streets before you would find rooms so fashionably furnished as these. I see he went in for driving; that is evident from these engravings on the walls."

"They are common, gaudy-looking things," Mark said, "and quite out of character with the furniture."

"Not at all, as times go, Mark; it is quite the thing for a man to have prints showing his tastes, riding or driving, shooting or coaching, or the ring. If you don't like them you can take them down, or, what will be better, take them out of their frames and put some of the champions past and present up there instead."

"I will see about it," Mark said with a laugh. "I may turn out a complete failure."

"There is no fear of that, Mark; and as the ring is all the fashion now, I can assure you it would be considered in good taste, though I own that in point of art most of these things leave a good deal to be desired. Now that

that important thing is settled, suppose you come and lunch with me in Covent Garden? I don't belong to a club yet, though I have got my name down at a couple of them, but as far as I can see they are slow sort of places unless you know a lot of people. The coffee-houses are much more amusing; you see people of all sorts there—fellows like myself, who have no clubs to go to; country gentlemen up for a week; a few writers, who, by the way, are not the best customers of these places; men whom nobody knows, and men whom everybody knows. Of course, the best time to see them is of an evening."

"Yes, I have generally been in of an evening when I have been up in town, Dick, and I have always been amused. However, I am quite ready to lunch there now, for I breakfasted early."

"I have to make some calls this afternoon, Mark. At seven this evening I will look in at your lodgings, and you shall go along with me to Ingleston's in St. Giles'. It is one of the headquarters of the fancy, and Jack Needham, who taught me, is safe to be there, and he will tell me who he thinks is best for you to begin with."

Accordingly, after taking luncheon, they separated, and Mark went to his inn.

Ingleston's was at that time regarded as the headquarters of the fancy. At the back of the house was a large room, with benches rising behind each other to accommodate the spectators. Here, on the evenings when it was known that leading men would put on the gloves, peers of the realm would sit side by side with sporting butchers, and men of fashion back their opinion on a coming prize-fight with ex-pugilists and publicans. A number of men were assembled in the bar; among these was Jack Needham.

"Good evening, Mr. Chetwynd," the man said as they came up to him. "It's going to be a good night. Tring and Bob Pratt are going to have a round or two together, and Gibbons will put on the gloves with anyone who likes to take him on."

"This gentleman is Mr. Thorndyke, a squire, Jack, whose place is near mine at Reigate. He has come up to town for a few months, and wants to learn how to use his

mauleys. I told him that you would advise him as to who would be the best man for him to go to."

"I can tell you better when I have seen him strip, sir. There is no one in the big room at present. It won't be open for half an hour. Ingleston keeps it shut as long as he can so as to give everyone a fair chance of a good place. If the gentleman will come in there with me I will have a look at him."

Mark expressed his willingness to be looked at, and the man having gone and got the key of the room from Ingleston, went in with them and locked the door behind.

"Now, sir, if you will strip to the waist I shall be better able to say who you should have as your teacher than I can now."

Mark stripped, and the man walked round and round him, examining him critically.

"He's a big 'un," he said to Dick when he had completed his examination. "He has got plenty of muscle and frame, and ought to be a tremendous hitter; he is about the figure of Gibbons, and if he goes in for it really, ought to make well-nigh as good a man, if not quite. I don't think Bill would care about taking him up till he knows a bit about it. I tell you what, sir; you will be too big altogether for me by the time you get to be quick on your legs, and to use your strength, but if you like I will take you on for a month or so—say, two months; by that time I think you will be good enough to go to Gibbons. I will just call him in if you don't mind; he came in just before you."

In a couple of minutes he came in with a man of similar height and somewhat similar figure to Mark.

"This is Gibbons, sir, ex-champion, and like enough he might be champion now if he chose; as fine a boxer as ever stripped, but he is ring-maker now to the P. C., and it suits him better to do that and to teach, than to have a chance of getting a battle once a year or so."

"Have you a great many pupils, Gibbons?"

The man shook his head.

"I am too big, sir; gentlemen like to learn from someone about their own weight, or perhaps a bit lighter, and

there are not many of them who would care to stand up against a man who has been champion, and so I have plenty of time on my hands. I am a hard hitter, too, even with the gloves; that is one reason why Jack had best take you on until you get a little handy with your fists. I do more in the dog-fancier line than I do with boxing, but there is nothing I like better than getting the gloves on with an amateur who is likely to be a credit to me. That is my card, sir; you will find me in pretty nearly any time of the day, and I have got a place behind the house where I do teaching when I get a chance. It is handy in one way, because you can drop in and take a lesson any time you like."

"That would suit me exceedingly well," Mark said; "and when I have had a couple of months with Needham I will come to you."

Mark now put on his clothes again, and they went out together, and re-entered a few minutes later, when the door was open. The benches were soon crowded. Mark had been to several prizefights with Dick Chetwynd, had often boxed with him and other lads, and had had lessons from an ex-prizefighter at Reigate, and was therefore able to appreciate the science shown by the various men who confronted each other. The event of the evening was the contest between Tring and Bob Pratt; both were very powerful men, who were about to go into strict training for matches that had been made for them against two west countrymen, who were thought very highly of by their friends, and who were regarded as possible candidates for the championship.

Bob Pratt was a stone heavier than his opponent, but far less active, and owed his position more to his ability to take punishment, and to hard-hitting powers, than to his science. In the two rounds that were fought, Tring had the advantage, but the general opinion was that in the long run the other would wear him down. Both fought with good temper, and were warmly applauded as they shook hands at the finish.

"I think I should back Tring in a fight," Mark said, as the meeting broke up, "but it is difficult to say, for he is in better condition than the other, and it may be that

when both are thoroughly fit the heavy man might show more improvement than he would do."

The hat was passed round at the conclusion. Every man dropped in his guinea, some more, it being understood that the collection was divided between the two men, to pay the expenses of their training.