to-night, to-morrow night. Two of the Bow Street officers are going down with me, and we shall have him as he comes home from one of his expenditions either on the highway or as a housebreaker. If he does not go this evening we shall wait until to-morrow, but at any rate, the first time that he goes out we shall have him."

"I have got a special engagement for this evening, Mark, or I would offer to go with you and lend you a hand, if necessary."

"There is no occasion for that, Dick. We shall take the fellow by surprise as he goes into his own house, and have him handcuffed before he can draw a pistol. Then, when we have got him fairly tied up, we shall put him into a light cart that we shall have handy, and bring him straight to Bow Street. To tell you the truth, I am so excited over the thought that I do not know how I should have got through the day if I had not come in to have a chat with you."

"I can quite understand that, old fellow. Well, the best thing we can do is to take a stroll out and look at the fashions. It is early yet, but just at present it is all the rage to turn out early. It will do me good too, for I was at Ingleston's last night, and the smoke and row has given me a headache. I shall really have to give up going there, except when there is an important fight on. It is too much to stand, and the tobacco is so bad that I am obliged to keep a suit of clothes for the purpose. Let us be off at once."

CHAPTER XVI.

At four o'clock Mark put up his horse at the Greyhound, and chatted for a quarter of an hour with the ostler, who had been making inquiries, and had heard of one or two other houses in the neighborhood which were untenanted. Mark then strolled up the town, exchanging a passing glance with Chester, who, in a velveteen coat, low hat and gaiters, was chatting with a wagoner going with a load of hay for the next morning's market in London. He turned into an inn, called for a pint of the best port, and sat down in the parlor at a table close to the window, so that he could see all who went up or down. He entered into conversation with two or three people who came in, and so passed the time till seven, when he felt too restless to sit still longer, and went out into the street.

When he was halfway to the Greyhound he heard the sound of a horse's hoofs behind him, and saw a quietly dressed man coming along at an easy trot. Had it not been that he recognized the horse, he could not have felt sure that its rider was the man whose coming he had been waiting for, there being nothing in his appearance that would excite the slightest suspicion that he was other that a gentleman of moderate means and quiet taste, either returning from a ride or passing through on his way to town. He had a well-built and active figure, carried himself with the ease of a thorough horseman, and nodded to one or two persons of his acquaintance, and checking his horse at the principal butcher's, ordered some meat to be sent in that evening.

Mark could trace no resemblance in the face to that of the young fellow he remembered. It was a quiet and resolute one. If this were Bastow, he had lost the sneering and insolent expression that was so strongly impressed on his memory. It might be the man, but if so, he was greatly changed. Mark's first impression was that it

could not be Bastow; but when he thought over the years of toil and confinement in the convict prison, the life he had led in the bush, and the two years he had passed since he returned home, he imagined that the insolence of youth might well have disappeared, and been succeeded by the resolute daring and dogged determination that seemed to be impressed on this fellow's face.

Mark paused fifty yards before he reached the inn. In a few minutes he saw Chester coming along. There was no one else in sight.

"Is it Bastow?" he asked, as the officer came up.

"It's Bastow sure enough, sir. But he is so changed that if I had not had him in my mind I should not have recognized him. I calculate that a man who has gone through what he has would have lost the expression he had as a boy. He must have learnt a lot in the convict prison, and the fact that he headed the mutiny and escaped from the searchers and managed to get home showed that he must have become a resolute and desperate man. All those burglaries, and the way in which he has several times stopped coaches single-handed, show his nerve and coolness. I had all that in my mind as he came along, and his face was pretty much as I expected to see it. He is a cool hand, and I can understand how he has given us the slip so long. There is none of the shifty look about his eyes that one generally sees in criminals, no glancing from side to side; he rode with the air of a man who had a right to be where he was, and feared no one. He will be an awkward customer to tackle if we do not take him by surprise."

"Yes, I agree with you there. However, he won't have much chance of using either his pistols or his strength. Here is Malcolm coming, so I will walk away for a few minutes, and let you go in first. You can tell the ostler now that you will have your horse put in at nine o'clock. I have been thinking, by the way, that we had better take the trap round behind the house instead of leaving it in the drive. The man may come back this way, and if so, he might hear the horse stamp or make some movement, and that would at once put him on his guard."

As the officers entered the inn Mark went into the yard and told the ostler that he had met some friends, and should let his horse remain there for the night.

"It is possible that they may drive me into the town in the morning," he said; "and I shall very likely send a man down for the horse."

At a quarter to nine he went out again, and walked to the house he had before visited; in ten minutes he heard the sound of wheels, threw open the gate, and the men, jumping down, led the horse in.

"You may as well take him out of the trap," he said. "We cannot very well get that round the house, but there is no difficulty about taking the horse."

The officers had brought a halter and a nosebag full of corn. The horse was fastened to a tree with soft ground round it, the nosebag put on, and a horse-cloth thrown over its back; then Mark and his two companions went out into the lane, and in a couple of minutes entered the next gate, treading lightly, and going round to the back of the house.

A light burned in the kitchen, and an old woman could be seen knitting. They lifted the latch and walked in. Dropping her knitting, she rose with an exclamation of terror.

Mark advanced alone.

"Do not be frightened," he said; "we are not going to do you any harm." He took out his little ebony staff. "We are constables," he went on, "and have orders to search this house. We must secure you, but you will be released in the morning. Now, which is your room?"

In spite of Mark's assurance, the old woman was almost paralyzed with terror. However, the two constables assisted her up to her room, and there secured her with a rope, taking care that it was not so tightly bound as to hurt her. Then they placed a gag in her mouth, and left her.

"Now let us search his room in the first place," Mark said, when they came downstairs again. "I hardly expect we shall find anything. You may be sure that he will have taken great pains to hide away any booty that he may have here, and that it will need daylight and a

closer search than we can give the place now, before we find anything."

The search of the house was indeed fruitless. They cut open the bed, prized up every loose board in the bedroom and the parlor, lifted the hearthstone, tapped the walls, and searched every drawer; then, taking a lantern, went out into the stable. The officers were both accustomed to look for hiding-places, and ran their hands along on the top of the walls, examining the stone flooring and manger.

"That is a very large corn-bin," Mark said, as he looked round, when they desisted from the search.

"You are right, sir. We will empty it."

There were two or three empty sacks on the ground near it, and they emptied the corn into these, so that there should be no litter about. Chester gave an exclamation of disappointment as they reached the bottom. Mark put his hand on the bin and gave it a pull.

"It is just as I thought," he said. "It is fastened down. I saw an ax in the woodshed, Malcolm; just fetch it here."

While the man was away Mark took the lantern and examined the bottom closely. "We shan't want the ax," he said, as he pointed out to Chester a piece of string that was apparently jammed in the form of a loop between the bottom and side. "Just get in and clear those few handfuls of corn out. I think you will see that it will pull up then."

There was, however, no movement in the bottom when Mark pulled at the loop.

"Look closely round outside," he said, handing Malcolm, who had now returned, the lantern. "I have no doubt that there is a catch somewhere."

In a minute or two the constable found a small ring between two of the cobblestones close to the foot of the wall. He pulled at it, and as he did so Mark felt the resistance to his pull cease suddenly, and the bottom of the bin came up like a trapdoor.

"That is a clever hiding-place," he said. "If I had not happened to notice that the bin was fixed we might have had a long search before we found it here."

Below was a square hole, the size of the bin; a ladder led down into it. Mark, with a lantern, descended. Four or five sacks piled on each other lay at the bottom, leaving just room enough for a man to stand beside them.

"The top one is silver by the feel," he said, "not yet broken up; these smaller sacks are solid. I suppose it is silver that has been melted down. This"—and he lifted a bag some eighteen inches deep, opened it, and looked in—"contains watches and jewels. Now I think we will leave things here for the present, and put everything straight. He may be back before long."

Mark ascended, the bottom of the trap was shut down again, the corn poured in, and the bags thrown down on the spot from which they had been taken. They returned to the house, shut the door, and extinguished the light.

"That has been a grand find," he said; "even if this is not Bastow, it will be a valuable capture."

"That it will, Mr. Thorndyke. I have no doubt that this fellow is the man we have been in search of for the last eighteen months; that accounts for our difficulty in laying hold of him. He has been too crafty to try to sell any of his plunder, so that none of the fences have known anything about him. No doubt he has taken sufficient cash to enable him to live here quietly. He intended some time or other to melt down all the rest of the plate and to sell the silver, which he could do easily enough. As for the watches and jewels, he could get rid of them abroad."

"No doubt that is what he intended," Mark agreed. "It is not often these fellows are as prudent as he has been; if they were, your work would be a good deal more difficult than it is."

"You are right, sir; I don't know that I ever heard of such a case before. The fellow almost deserves to get away."

"That would be rewarding him too highly for his caution," Mark laughed. "He is a desperate villain, and all the more dangerous for being a prudent one. Now, I think one of us had better keep watch at the gate by turns. We shall hear him coming in plenty of time to get back here and be in readiness for him. We must

each understand our part thoroughly. I will stand facing the door. It is possible that he may light that lantern we saw hanging in the stable, but I don't think it likely he will do so; he will take off the saddle, and either take the horse in there—there is plenty of food in the manger—or else turn it out into the paddock. As he comes in I will throw my arms round him and you will at once close in, one on each side, each catch an arm tightly, handcuff him, and take the pistols from his belt. Don't leave go of his arms until I have lit the candle; he may have another pistol inside his coat, and might draw it."

It was now one o'clock, and half an hour later Malcolm, who was at the gate, came in quietly and said he could hear a horse coming along the lane.

"Which way, Malcolm?"

"Tooting way."

"That is all right. I have been a little nervous lest if he came the other way our horse might make some slight noise and attract his attention; that was our only weak point."

They had already ascertained that the front door was locked and bolted, and that he must therefore enter through the kitchen. They heard the horse stop in front, a moment later the gate was opened, and through the window they could just make out the figure of a man leading a horse; then the stable door opened, and they heard a movement, and knew that the horse was being unsaddled; they heard it walk into the stable, the door was shut behind it, and a step approached the back door. It was opened, and a voice said with an oath, "The old fool has forgotten to leave a candle burning"; then he stepped into the kitchen.

In an instant there was a sound of a violent struggle, deep oaths and curses, two sharp clicks, then all was quiet except heavy breathing and the striking of flint on a tinder-box; there was the blue glare of the sulphur match, and a candle was lighted. Mark then turned to the man who was standing still grasped in the hands of his two captors.

"Arthur Bastow," he said, producing his staff, "I

arrest you in the King's name, as an escaped convict, as a notorious highwayman and housebreaker."

As his name was spoken the man started, then he said quietly:

"You have made a mistake this time, my men; my name is William Johnson; I am well known here, and have been a quiet resident in this house for upwards of a year."

"A resident, but not a quiet resident, Bastow. I don't think we are mistaken; but even if you can prove that you are not Bastow, but William Johnson, a man of means and family, we have evidence enough upon the other charges. We have been in search of you for a long time, and have got you at last. You don't remember me, though it is but eighteen months since we met; but I fancy that I then left a mark upon you that still remains on your shoulder. I am Mark Thorndyke, and you will understand now why I have hunted you down."

"The game is not finished yet," the man said recklessly. "The hunting down will be the other way next time, Mark Thorndyke."

"I don't think so. Now, Chester, you may as well tie his feet together, and then search him. When that is done I will look after him while you fetch the trap round."

In his pockets were found two gold watches, forty-eight pounds in gold, and a hundred pounds in bank notes.

"We shall hear where this comes from to-morrow," Malcolm said, as he laid them on the table; "it will save us the trouble of getting evidence from Australia."

The prisoner was placed in a chair, and then the two officers went out to fetch the trap round.

"So you have turned thief-catcher, have you?" he said in a sneering tone, that recalled him to Mark's memory far more than his face had done, "and you carry a Bow Street staff about with you, and pretend to belong to the force: that is a punishable offense, you know."

"Yes, it would be if I had no right to use it," Mark said quietly; "but it happens that I have a right, having been for a year and a half in the force. I joined it solely

to hunt you down, and now that I have done so my resignation will be sent in to-morrow."

"And how is the worthy squire?"

Mark started to his feet, and seized one of the pistols lying before him.

"You villain!" he exclaimed, "I wonder you dare mention his name—you, his murderer."

"It was but tit for tat," the man said coolly; "he murdered me, body and soul, when he sent me to the hulks. I told him I would be even with him. I did not think I had hit him at the time, for I thought that if I had you would have stopped with him, and would not have chased me across the fields."

"You scoundrel!" Mark said. "You know well enough that you came back, stole into his room, and stabbed him."

Bastow looked at him with a puzzled expression.

"I don't know what you are talking about," he said. "I fired at him through the window—I don't mind saying so to you, because there are no witnesses—and saw him jump up, but I fancied I had missed him. I saw you bolt out of the room, and thought it better to be off at once instead of taking another shot. You gave me a hard chase. It was lucky for you that you did not come up with me, for if you had done so I should have shot you; I owed you one for having killed as good a comrade as man ever had, and for that bullet you put in my shoulder before. If I had not been so out of breath that I could not feel sure of my aim I should have stopped for you, but I rode straight to town."

"A likely story," Mark said shortly. "What, you will pretend that there were two murderers hanging round the house that night?—a likely tale indeed."

"I tell you that if your father was killed by a knife or dagger, I had nothing to do with it," the man said. "I am obliged to the man, whoever he was. I had intended to go down again to Reigate to finish the job myself; I should scarcely have missed a second time. So it is for that you hunted me down? Well, I don't blame you; I never forgive an injury, and I see your sentiments are mine. Whether I killed your father or not makes no

difference; he was killed, that is the principal point; if I was going to be put on my trial for that I could prove that at eight o'clock I was in a coffee-house in Covent Garden. I purposely kicked up a row there, and was turned out, so that if I were charged with that shooting affair I could prove that I was in London that evening."

"I can't quite believe that," Mark said; "a fast horse would have brought you up to town in an hour and a half, and another fast horse would have taken you back again as quickly; so you might have been in London at eight and back again at Crowswood by half-past twelve or one, even if you stopped a couple of hours at a coffee-house. However, you won't be tried for that. Those things on the table and the contents of that corn-bin are enough to hang you a dozen times."

"Curse you! have you found that out?" Bastow exclaimed furiously.

"We have," Mark replied. "It would have been wiser if you had got rid of your things sooner. It was a clever hiding-place, but it is always dangerous to keep such things by you, Bastow."

The man said no more, but sat quietly in his chair until they heard the vehicle stop outside the gate. Then the two constables came in, and lifting Bastow, carried him out and placed him in the bottom of the cart.

"You can loose the old woman now, Malcolm," Mark said as he took his seat and gathered the reins in his hand. "By eleven o'clock, no doubt, one of the others will be down with the gig again, and you can empty out the contents of that hole, and bring them up with you. I don't think that it will be of any use searching further. You might have a good look all round before you come away. There may be some notes stowed away, though it is likely enough that they have been sent away by post to some receiver abroad."

For some time after starting they could hear the prisoner moving about uneasily in the straw.

"I suppose there is no fear of his slipping out of those handcuffs, Chester?"

"Not a bit; they are full tight for him. I expect that that is what is making him uncomfortable."

Presently the movement ceased.

"He is still enough now, Mr. Thorndyke. I should not be at all surprised if he has dropped off to sleep. He is hardened enough to sleep while the gibbet was waiting for him."

It was four o'clock in the morning when they drove up at Bow Street. Two constables on duty came out to the cart.

"We have got a prisoner, Inspector," Chester said. "He is the man we have been looking for so long. I fancy we have got all the swag that has been stolen for the last eighteen months—bags of jewels and watches, and sacks of silver. He is handcuffed, and his legs are tied, so we must carry him in."

The officer fetched out a lantern. The other constable helped him to let down the backboard of the cart.

"Now, Bastow, wake up," Chester said. "Here we are."

But there was no movement.

"He is mighty sound asleep," the constable said.

"Well, haul him out;" and, taking the man by the shoulders, they pulled him out from the cart.

"There is something rum about him," the constable said; and as they lowered his feet to the pavement his head fell forward, and he would have sunk down if they had not supported him.

The Inspector raised the lantern to his face.

"Why, the man is dead," he said.

"Dead!" Chester repeated incredulously.

"Aye, that he is. Look here;" and he pointed to a slim steel handle some three inches long, projecting over the region of the heart. "You must have searched him very carelessly, Chester. Well, bring him in now."

They carried him into the room, where two candles were burning. Mark followed them. The inspector pulled out the dagger. It was but four inches long, with a very thin blade. The handle was little thicker than the blade itself. Mark took it and examined it.

"I have not a shadow of doubt that this is the dagger with which he murdered my father. The wound was very narrow, about this width, and the doctor said that the weapon that had been used was certainly a foreign dagger."

"I don't think this is a foreign dagger," the Inspector said on examining it, "although it may be the one that was used, as you say, Mr. Thorndyke. It has evidently been made to carry about without being observed."

He threw back the dead man's coat.

"Ah, here is where it was kept. You see, the lining has been sewn to the cloth, so as to make a sheath down by the seam under the arm. I expect that, knowing what would happen if he were caught, he had made up his mind to do it all along. Well, I don't know that you are to be so much blamed, Chester, for, passing your hand over his clothes, you might very well miss this, which is no thicker than a piece of whalebone. Well, well, he has saved us a good deal of trouble. You say you have got most of the booty he has collected?"

"I don't know that we have got all of it, sir, but we have made a very big haul, anyhow; it was a cunningly contrived place. There was a big corn-bin in the stable, and when we had emptied out the corn it seemed empty. However, Mr. Thorndyke discovered that the bin was fixed. Then we found that the bottom was really a trap-door, and under it was a sort of well in which were sacks and bags. One of the sacks was full of unbroken silver, two other contained silver ingots, things that he had melted down, and there was a large bag full of watches and jewels. In his pocket we found a hundred pounds in bank notes, about fifty guineas, and a couple of gold watches."

"That he must have got to-night from the Portsmouth coach; we heard half an hour ago that it had been stopped near Kingston, the coachman shot, and the passengers robbed. It will be good news to some of them that we have got hold of their valuables. Well, Mr. Thorndyke, I have to congratulate you most heartily on the skill with which you have ferreted out a man who had baffled us for so long, and had become a perfect terror to the south of London. No doubt we shall be able to trace a great portion of the property in that sack. The capture has been splendidly effected."

"You will understand," Mark said, "that I do not wish my name to appear in the matter at all. I have, as you know, been actuated by private reasons only in my search, and I see no occasion why my name should be mentioned; the evidence of Chester and Malcolm will be ample. From information received, they went down to this place, searched it in his absence, discovered the stolen goods, and captured them. Having handcuffed and bound him, one drove him up to town, the other remaining to guard the treasure. On his way he got at this hidden dagger and stabbed himself. My evidence would not strengthen the case at all."

"No, I don't see that it will be necessary to call you, Mr. Thorndyke. The discovery of this hidden booty and the proceeds of the coach robbery would be quite sufficient. Beyond the coroner's inquest there will be no inquiry. Had it been otherwise it might probably have been necessary to call you at the trial. However, as it is, it will save a lot of trouble; now we shall only need to find the owners of these bank notes. I will send off a cart for the things as early as I can get one, and will send a couple of constables round to the houses where burglaries have been committed to request the owners to come over and see if they can identify any of their property; and those who do so can attend the inquest to-morrow, though I don't suppose they will be called. The chief will be mightily pleased when he hears what has taken place, for he has been sadly worried by these constant complaints, and I fancy that the authorities have been rather down upon him on the subject. The announcement that the career of this famous robber has been brought to an end will cause quite a sensation, and people round the commons on the south side will sleep more quietly than they have done lately. I expect that if he had not put an end to himself we should have had to send him across to Newington to-day, for of course it is a Surrey business, though we have had the luck to take him. I suppose we shall not see much of you in the future, Mr. Thorndyke?"

"No indeed," Mark said. "My business is done, and I shall send in my resignation this morning. I don't

regret the time that I have spent over it; I have learned a great deal, and have seen a lot of the shady side of life, and have picked up experience in a good many ways."

Mark, after requesting the Inspector to find a man to go over to Streatham and bring back his horse, and writing an order to the ostler to deliver it, walked across to his lodgings. Upon the whole, he was not sorry that Bastow had taken the matter into his own hands; he had, certainly, while engaged in the search, looked forward to seeing him in the dock and witnessing his execution, but he now felt that enough had been done for vengeance, and that it was as well that the matter had ended as it had. He was wearied out with the excitement of the last forty-eight hours. It was one o'clock when he awoke, and after dressing and going into Covent Garden to lunch at one of the coffee-houses, he made his way up to Islington.

"Taking a day's holiday?" Millicent asked as he came in.

"Well, not exactly, Millicent; I have left school altogether."

"Left school, Mark? Do you mean that you have decided that it is of no use going on any longer?"

"I have given it up because I have finished it. Arthur Bastow was captured last night, and committed suicide as he was being taken to the station."

An exclamation of surprise broke from Mrs. Cunningham and Millicent.

"It seems horrid to be glad that anyone has taken his own life," the latter said; "but I cannot help feeling so, for as long as he lived I should never have considered that you were safe, and besides, I suppose there is no doubt that if he had not killed himself he would have been hung."

"There is not a shadow of doubt about that," Mark replied. "We found the proceeds of a vast number of robberies at his place, and also in his pockets the money he had taken from the passengers of the Portsmouth coach an hour before we captured him. So that, putting aside that Australian business altogether, his doom was sealed."

"Now, please, tell us all about it," Mrs. Cunningham said. "But first let us congratulate you most warmly not only on the success of your search, but that the work is at an end."

"Yes, I am glad it is over. At first I was very much interested; in fact, I was intensely interested all along, and should have been for however long it had continued. But, at the same time, I could do nothing else, and one does not want to spend one's whole life as a detective. At last it came about almost by chance, and the only thing I have to congratulate myself upon is that my idea of the sort of place he would have taken was exactly borne out by fact." And Mark then gave them a full account of the manner in which the discovery had been made and the capture effected.

"You see, Millicent, I followed your injunction, and was very careful. Taking him by surprise as I did, I might have managed it single-handed, but with the aid of two good men it made a certainty of it, and the whole thing was comfortably arranged."

"I think you have done splendidly, Mark," Mrs. Cunningham said. "It was certainly wonderful that you should have found him doing exactly what you had guessed, even down to the deaf servant. Well, now that is done and over, what do you think of doing next?"

"I have hardly thought about that," he replied; "but, at any rate, I shall take a few weeks' holiday, and I suppose after that I shall settle down to the search for my uncle's treasure. I am afraid that will be a much longer and a vastly more difficult business than this has been. Here there were all sorts of clews to work upon. Bastow ought to have been captured months ago, but in this other affair, so far, there is next to nothing to follow up. We don't even know whether the things are in India or in England. I believe they will be found, but that it will be by an accident. Besides, I fancy that we shall hear about them when you come of age, Millicent. There was to have been no change till that time, and I cannot help thinking that Uncle George must have made some provisions by which we should get to know about them in

the event of his death without his having an opportunity of telling anyone where they are.

"He might have been killed in battle; he might have been drowned on his way home. He had thought the whole matter over so thoroughly, I do think the possibilities of this could not have escaped him. As I told you, Mr. Prendergast made inquiries of all the principal bankers and Indian agents here, and altogether without success. After he had done that, I got a list of all the leading firms in Calcutta and Madras, and wrote to them, and all the replies were in the negative. It is true that does not prove anything absolutely. Eighteen years is a long time, and the chances are that during those years almost every head of a firm would have retired and come home. Such a matter would only be likely to be known to the heads; and if, as we thought likely, the box or chest was merely forwarded by a firm there to England, the transaction would not have attracted any special attention. If, upon the other hand, it remained out there it might have been put down in a cellar or store, and have been lying there ever since, altogether forgotten."

"I don't see myself why you should bother any more about it; perhaps, as you say, it will turn up of itself when I come of age. At any rate, I should say it is certainly as well to wait till then and see if it does, especially as you acknowledge that you have no clew whatever to work on. It is only three more years, for I am eighteen next week, and it certainly seems to me that it will be very foolish to spend the next three years in searching about for a thing that may come to you without any searching at all."

"Well, I will think it over."

"You see, you really don't want the money, Mark," she went on.

"No, I don't want it particularly, Millicent; but when one knows that there is something like £50,000 waiting for one somewhere, one would like to get it. Your father worked for twenty years of his life accumulating it for us, and it seems to me a sort of sacred duty to see that his labor has not all been thrown away."

Millicent was silent.

"It is very tiresome," she said presently. "Of course my father intended, as you say, that his savings should come to us, but I am sure he never meant that they should be a bother and a trouble to us."

"I don't see why they should ever be that, Millicent. As it is we have both sufficient for anything any man or woman could reasonably want, and neither of us need fret over it if the treasure is never found. Still, he wished us to have it, and it is properly ours, and I don't want it to go to enrich someone who has not a shadow of a right to it."

On the following morning Mark went to attend the inquest on Bastow. He did not go into the court, however, but remained close at hand in the event of the coroner insisting upon his being called. However, the two men only spoke casually in their evidence of their comrade Roberts, who had been also engaged in the capture. One of the jurymen suggested that he should also be called, but the coroner said:

"I really cannot see any occasion for it; we are here to consider how the deceased came by his death, and I think it must be perfectly clear that he came by it by his own act. You have heard how he was captured, that the spoils of the coach that he had just rifled were found upon him, and that the booty he had been acquiring from his deeds for months past also was seized; therefore, as the man was desperate, and knew well enough that his life was forfeited, there was ample motive for his putting an end to his wretched existence. I really do not think, gentlemen, that it is worth while to waste your time and mine by going into further evidence."

Finally, a verdict of *felo de se* was returned, with a strong expression of the jury's admiration of the conduct of constables Malcolm, Chester, and Roberts, who had so cleverly effected the capture of the man who had so long set the law at defiance.

CHAPTER XVII.

Four days later Mark, on his return from dinner, found Philip Cotter sitting in his room waiting for him. They had met on the previous evening, and Cotter had expressed his intention of calling upon him the next day.

"I am here on a matter of business, Thorndyke," the latter said as they shook hands.

"Of business!" Mark repeated.

"Yes. You might guess for a year, and I don't suppose that you would hit it. It is rather a curious thing. Nearly twenty years ago——"

"I can guess it before you go any further," Mark exclaimed, leaping up from the seat that he had just taken. "Your people received a box from India."

"That is so Mark; although how you guessed it I don't know."

"We have been searching for it for years," Mark replied. "Our lawyer, Prendergast, wrote to you about that box; at least, he wrote to you asking if you had any property belonging to Colonel Thorndyke, and your people wrote to say they hadn't."

"Yes, I remember I wrote to him myself. Of course that was before you did me that great service, and I did not know your name, and we had not the name on our books. What is in the box?"

"Jewels worth something like fifty thousand pounds."

"By Jove, I congratulate you, old fellow; that is to say, if you have the handling of it. Well, this is what happened. The box was sent to us by a firm in Calcutta, together with bills for £50,000. The instructions were that the money was to be invested in stock, and that we were to manage it and to take £100 a year for so doing. The rest of the interest of the money was to be invested. The box was a very massive one, and was marked with the letters X. Y. Z. It was very carefully sealed. Our