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

instructions were that the owner of the box and the money might present himself at any time."

"And that the proof of his ownership was to be that he was to use the word 'Masulipatam,'" Mark broke in, "and produce a gold coin that would, probably—though of this I am not certain—correspond with the seals." He got up and went to the cabinet which he had brought up with him from Crowswood, unlocked it, and produced the piece of paper and the coin.

"Yes, that looks like the seal, Thorndyke. At any rate, it is the same sort of thing. Why on earth didn't you come with it before, and take the things away?"

"Simply because I did not know where to go to. My uncle was dying when he came home, and told my father about the treasure, but he died suddenly, and my father did not know whether it was sent to England or committed to someone's charge in India, or buried there. We did the only thing we could, namely, inquired at all the banks and agents here and at all the principal firms in Madras and Calcutta to ask if they had in their possession any property belonging to the late Colonel Thorndyke."

"You see, we did not know," Cotter went on, "any more than Adam, to whom the box belonged. Fortunately, the agent sent in his communication a sealed letter, on the outside of which was written, 'This is to remain unopened, but if no one before that date presents himself with the token and password, it is to be read on the 18th of August, 1789.' That was yesterday, you know."

"Yes, that was my cousin's eighteenth birthday. We thought if my uncle had left the box in anyone's charge he would probably have given him some such instructions, for at that time there was hard fighting in India, and he might have been killed any day, and would therefore naturally have made some provisions for preventing the secret dying with him."

"We did not think of it until this morning early, though we have been rather curious over it ourselves. When we opened it, inside was another letter addressed 'To be delivered to John Thorndyke, Esquire, at Crawley,

near Hastings, or at Crowswood, Reigate, or in the event of his death to his executors.'"

"I am one of his executors," Mark said; "Mr. Prendergast, the lawyer, is the other. I think I had better go round to him to-morrow and open the letter there."

"Oh, I should think you might open it at once, Thorndyke. It will probably only contain instructions, and, at any rate, as you have the coin and the word, you could come round to-morrow morning and get the chest out if you want it."

"I won't do that," Mark said; "the coffer contains gems worth over £50,000, and I would very much rather it remained in your keeping until I decide what to do with it. How large is it?"

"It is a square box, about a foot each way; and it is pretty heavy, probably from the setting of the jewels. Well, anyhow, I am heartily glad, Thorndyke. I know, of course, that you are well off, still £100,000—for the money has doubled itself since we had it—to say nothing of the jewels, is a nice plum to drop into anyone's mouth."

"Very nice indeed, although only half of it comes to me under my uncle's will. To tell you the truth, I am more glad that the mystery has been solved than at getting the money; the affair was a great worry to my father, and has been so to me. I felt that I ought to search for the treasure, and yet the probability of finding it seemed so small that I felt the thing was hopeless, and that really the only chance was that my uncle would have taken just the course he did, and have fixed some date when the treasure should be handed over, if not asked for. I rather fancied that it would not have been for another three years, for that is when my cousin comes of age."

"What cousin do you mean?" Philip Cotter asked. "I did not know you had one."

"Well, that is at present a secret, Cotter—one of the mysteries connected with my uncle's will. For myself, I would tell it in the market-place to-morrow, but she wishes it to be preserved at present; you shall certainly know as soon as anyone. By the way, I have not seen

you at Mrs. Cunningham's for the last week, and you used to be a pretty regular visitor."

"No," the young man said gloomily; "I don't mind telling you that Miss Conyers refused me a fortnight ago. I never thought that I had much chance, but I had just a shadow of hope, and that is at an end now."

"Perhaps in the future——" Mark suggested for the sake of saying something.

"No; I said as much as that to her, and she replied that it would always be the same, and I gathered from her manner, although she did not exactly say so, that there was someone else in the case, and yet I have never met anyone often there."

"Perhaps you are mistaken," Mark said.

"Well, whether or not, there is clearly no hope for me. I am very sorry, but it is no use moping over it. My father and mother like her so much, and they are anxious for me to marry and settle down; altogether, it would have been just the thing. I do not know whether she has any money, and did not care, for of course I shall have plenty. I shall be a junior partner in another six months; my father told me so the other day. He said that at one time he was afraid that I should never come into the house, for that it would not have been fair to the others to take such a reckless fellow in, but that I seemed to have reformed so thoroughly since that affair that if I continued so for another six months they should have no hesitation in giving me a share."

It was too late to go up to Islington that evening. In the morning Mark went with the still unopened letter to the solicitor's. The old lawyer congratulated him most heartily when he told him of the discovery that he had made.

"I am glad indeed, Mark; not so much for the sake of the money, but because I was afraid that that confounded treasure was going to unsettle your life. When a man once begins treasure-hunting it becomes a sort of craze, and he can no more give it up than an opium smoker can the use of the drug. Thank goodness, that is over; so the capital amount is doubled, and you are accordingly worth £70,000 more than you were this time

yesterday—a fine windfall! Now let us see what your uncle says."

He broke the seal. The letter was a short one, and began:

"My Dear John:

"If you have not, before you receive this, got my treasure, you will get it on the 18th or 19th of August, 1789. I have made a will which will give you full instructions what to do with it. I may say, though, that I have left it between a little daughter who was born six months ago, and your son Mark. My own intentions are to stop out here until I get the rank of general, and I have taken the measures that I have done in case a bullet or a sharp attack of fever carries me off suddenly. I hope that you will have carried out the provisions of my will, and I hope also that I shall have come home and talked the whole matter over with you before I go under.

"Your affectionate brother."

"A singular man," Mr. Prendergast said, as he laid the letter down on the table beside him. "What trouble these crotchety people do give! I suppose you have altogether put aside that folly of his about the jewels?"

"Well, no, I can't say that I have, Mr. Prendergast. Do you know that I have a fancy—it may only be a fancy, but if so, I cannot shake it off—that I am watched by Lascars. There was one standing at the corner of the street as I came up this morning, and again and again I have run across one. It is not always the same man, nor have I any absolute reasons for believing that they are watching me; still, somehow or other, I do come across them more frequently than seems natural."

"Pooh, nonsense, Mark! I should have thought that you were too sensible a fellow to have such ridiculous fancies in your head."

"Of course, I should never have thought of such a thing, Mr. Prendergast, if it had not been for what my father told me, that my uncle was desperately in earnest about it, and had an intense conviction that someone watched his every movement."

"Don't let us talk of such folly any longer," the lawyer said irritably. "Now that you have got the money, the best thing you can do is to go at once and carry out what was the wish both of your father and your uncle, and ask your cousin to marry you; that will put an end to the whole business, and I can tell you that I am positively convinced that the day she gets twenty-one she will renounce the property, and that if you refuse to take it she will pass it over to some hospital or other. You cannot do better than prevent her from carrying out such an act of folly as that, and the only way that I can see is by your marrying her. I gathered from what you said when I gave you the same advice at Reigate that you liked her and should have done it had it not been for her coming into the estate instead of you. Well, you are now in a position to ask her to marry you without the possibility of its being supposed that you are a fortune-hunter."

"I will think about it, Mr. Prendergast. Of course this money does make a considerable difference in my position; however, I shall do nothing until I have got the jewels off my hands."

"Well, a couple of days will manage that," the lawyer said; "you have only got to take the box to a first-class jeweler, and get him to value the things and make you an offer for the whole of them."

Mark did not care to press the subject, and on leaving went to Cotter's Bank. He was at once shown into his friend's room, and the latter took him to his father.

"It is curious, Mr. Thorndyke," the latter said heartily, "that we should have been keeping your money all this time without having the slightest idea that it belonged to you. We are ready at once to pay it over to your order, for if you pronounce the word you know of, and I find that the coin you have corresponds with the seal on the box, the necessary proof will be given us that you have authority to take it away. I have had the box brought up this morning, so that we can compare the seal."

The box was taken out of the strong safe, and it was at once seen that the coin corresponded with the seals.

"I will leave it with you for the present, Mr. Cotter; it contains a large amount of jewels, and until I have decided what to do with them I would rather leave them; it would be madness to have £50,000 worth of gems in a London lodging, even for a single night. As to the money, that also had better remain as it is at present invested. As I told your son—that and the jewels are the joint property of myself and another. I dare say that in a few days half of the money will be transferred to the name of the other legatee; that can be easily done. I shall get my lawyer, Mr. Prendergast, to call upon you, Mr. Cotter. I suppose it would be better that some legal proof that we are entitled to the money should be given."

"I shall be glad to see him and to take his instructions," the banker said; "but in point of fact I regard the property as yours; I have nothing to do with wills or other arrangements. I simply received the box and the cash with an order that they should be delivered to whomsoever should come with the word 'Masulipatam' and a coin to match the seals. That you have done, and with subsequent dispositions I have no concern. I shall be happy to keep this box for you as long as you should think proper; and I have also written out an acknowledgement that I hold securities of the value, at the closing prices yesterday, of £103,000 16*s.*;" and he handed the paper to Mark.

As the latter left the bank he looked up and down the street, and muttered an angry exclamation as he caught sight of a rough-looking fellow just turning a corner into a side street. The glance was so momentary a one that he could not say whether the man was a colored seaman; but he certainly thought that he was a Lascar.

"I am going to have trouble about that bracelet," he said to himself, as he hailed a hackney coach and told him to drive to Islington. "I am convinced that the Colonel was right, and that there are some men over in this country with the fixed purpose of seeing what is done with those jewels, and obtaining them if possible. How they could tell that they were deposited at Cotter's beats me altogether. It may be indeed that they really knew

nothing about it, and have simply been watching me. They can hardly have been watching me for the last nine months, and yet, curiously enough, though I have never given the matter a thought since, Charley Gibbons said that it was a dark-colored man who brought the news that took them to my rescue and saved my life. I have often run against Lascars, and if they have taken this trouble all along, now that they have seen me come out of the bank, I shall be watched night and day.

"It is a creepy sort of idea. I should not be afraid of any number of them if they attacked me openly; but there is no saying what they might do. I wish Ramoo had been here. I would have consulted him about it; but as I got a letter from him only last week saying that he had, on the day of writing it, arrived in Calcutta, it is of no use wishing that. At any rate, I cannot do better than stick to the plan that my uncle sketched out, and take them across to Amsterdam. It would be very unfair to take them to any jeweler here. He might have them in his possession for a week or ten days before he made me any definite offer for them, and during that time I would not give a fig for his life. If I distribute the stones at Amsterdam they would hardly set about attacking twelve diamond merchants one after another. Well, at any rate, I must say nothing about the affair to Millicent and Mrs. Cunningham. It was bad enough my running risks in the pursuit of Bastow; but this would be ten times worse, and I know Millicent would be for letting the things remain for good at the banker's. But I have no idea of allowing myself to be frightened by two or three black scoundrels into throwing away £50,000."

Mrs. Cunningham and Millicent were sitting in their bonnets in the parlor.

"Here you are at last, sir," the girl said. "Another five minutes, and we should have gone out. You told us that you would come early, and now it is twelve o'clock; and you are generally so punctual in your appointments. What have you got to say for yourself?"

"A good many things have happened since then, Millicent. Last night your friend Mr. Cotter called upon me."

"Why do you say my friend? He was your friend, and it was entirely through you that we knew him at all."

"Well, we will say 'our friend,' Millicent; and he made a communication to me that this morning I had to go to Mr. Prendergast and make a communication to him."

"What do you mean by your communications?" Millicent asked, laughing. "You are quite mysterious, Mark."

"And then I had to go," he went on, without heeding her interruption, "to Cotter's Bank, where I saw both our friend and his father, and there is the result of these communications and that interview;" and he threw the paper to her.

"What does it mean?" she asked in astonishment, after glancing through it.

"It means, dear, that your father took exactly the precautions I thought he would take, and after sending his money and jewels home, he sent a sealed letter to the firm with whom he deposited them, which happened to be Cotter's, with instructions that should no one present himself with the word and coin by the 18th of August, 1789—that is to say, on your eighteenth birthday—the envelope should be opened; it was so opened, and it contained a letter that was to be sent to my father, or, in the case of his death before that date, to his executors."

"How wonderful!" the girl said. "I had quite given up all idea of it. But how is it that it came to be so much? Have they sold the jewels?"

"No; you see it is the compound interest going on for seventeen years, and perhaps some rise in the value of the securities, that has doubled the original sum invested. As for the jewels, I have left them at the bank; I should not care about having £50,000 worth of such things in my rooms and I should not think that you would like to have them here, either."

"Certainly not," Mrs. Cunningham said emphatically; "you did quite right, Mark. I don't think I could sleep, even if you had half a dozen of your detective friends posted round the house."

"Still I suppose we shall have a chance of seeing them?" Millicent said.

"Certainly. I can make an appointment with Philip

Cotter for you see them at the bank; or if I take them to a jeweler to value, you could see them there. But I should think that the bank would be the best. I am sure that Cotter would put his room at your disposal, and, of course, if you would like to have some of them for yourself you could select any you liked, but I expect that they won't look much in their present settings; the Indian jewelers have not the knack of setting off gems. However, there is no hurry about them one way or another. The money, I have told Cotter's father, shall, for the present, remain as it is invested; it is all in the Funds, Cotter said, for although the instructions were that it was to be put into good securities, he did not feel justified under the peculiar circumstances in going outside Government stock. Mr. Prendergast is quite of opinion that it would be better to make no change until you come of age. I did not know whether you would wait till then, for some purpose or other you might want to use some of it."

Millicent shrugged her shoulders.

"I think I would much rather have had just the money I had before, Mark; all this will be a great nuisance, I am sure. I think there ought to be a law against women having more than £20,000, whether in money or in land."

Mark laughed.

"It would be a bad thing for spendthrift young noblemen, Millicent. How are they to pay off their debts and mortgages if there were no heiresses ready to do so in exchange for a title?"

"It would be a good thing for them, I consider," the girl said indignantly. "In the first place, they would not impoverish themselves if they knew that there was no way of building up their fortune again, and in the next place, if they did ruin themselves they would have to either set to work to earn an honest living or blow out their brains, if they have any to blow out. I can assure you that I don't feel at all exultant at getting all this money, and I think that my father was quite right in wishing that I should know nothing about it until I married; but, on the other hand, I am heartily glad, more

glad than I can say, Mark, that you have come into your share."

"I am glad for one reason, Millicent; that is, that this must put an end to the ridiculous idea you have of giving up Crowswood. Your father has made me rich beyond anything I could possibly have expected from him. I suddenly find myself a wealthy man, and I can buy another estate for myself worth more than Crowswood if inclined to settle down as a squire; therefore your theory that I have been disappointed in not inheriting what I thought was my father's estate falls to the ground altogether. In no case would I ever have accepted your sacrifice. If you had liked to hand it over to St. Bartholomew's or Guy's Hospital, or to give it away to any other charity, I would not have prevented you, but I would never have accepted it for myself. Now, thank goodness, the question cannot arise; for you must see that, even looking at the matter from a purely business point of view, I have benefited to an enormous and altogether unexpected extent by your father's will, and if any contest between us could arise it should be on the ground that he has acted unfairly to you by giving me so large a proportion of the money that, in the course of nature, you should have inherited. It was not even as if he had known and liked me, for I was but four years old at the time he wrote the letter saying that I was to share the money and jewels with you."

"You are very obstinate and very disagreeable, Mark," she said, with tears in her eyes.

"I think the obstinacy has been principally on your side, Millicent; though certainly I should not think of saying that you have been disagreeable. It has been an excess of kindheartedness on your part, and you have resolutely closed your eyes to the fact that, had I been willing to take advantage of your generosity, I should have lacked the courage to do so, for I should have been pointed at wherever I went, as a mean fellow who took advantage of his little cousin's romantic generosity. Pray, dear, let us say no more about it. We are two rich young people; we have both an estate; yours, I grant, is the larger, but if I choose I can increase mine, until it is quite as large as

Crowswood. We can be better friends than we have been for the last year, because this point of dispute has always stood between us and made us uncomfortable. Now you will have to think over what you would like done, and whether you wish any change made in your manner of living."

"Did you tell Mr. Cotter," Millicent laughed, after a pause, "that I had a half-share in the money?"

"No, that was a matter for you to decide, not for me. I told him that I was only a half-shareholder, but there was no necessity to say who it was who had the other half. When I was talking to Philip Cotter, the words 'my cousin' slipped out, but he did not associate it in any way with you. It might have been the son of another brother or of a sister of my father's."

"In that case, then, we will certainly make no change, will we, Mrs. Cunningham?"

"I think, Millicent, that Mr. Prendergast and Mark will probably be of opinion that you ought now to be introduced regularly into society. The fact that you are a rich heiress might, as your father so much wished, remain a secret. But it is one thing having this blazoned about and quite another for you to be living quietly here, where, with the exception of Mr. Cotter and a few other friends, you have no society whatever. Certainly it was not the wish of your father that you should remain unmarried. You are quite pretty and nice enough to be sought for yourself alone, and I must say that I think, now that you have finished with your various masters, it would be well that you should go out a good deal more, and that as a first step we should go down to Bath this year instead of paying another visit to Weymouth, as we had arranged."

"I don't want any change at all, Mrs. Cunningham. If I am to get married I shall be married; if I am not I shall not fret about it."

"But for all that, Millicent," Mark said, "Mrs. Cunningham is right. We quite agree that there is no occasion whatever for you to go about labeled 'A good estate and over £70,000 in cash,' but I do think that it is right that you should go into society. With the

exception of Philip Cotter, Dick Chetwynd, and two or three other of my friends, you really know very few people. You have now gone out of mourning, and I think that Mrs. Cunningham's proposal that you should go down to Bath is a very good one. I shall not be sorry for a change myself, for I have been engrossed in my work for a long time now. I can go down a day or two before you, and get you comfortable lodgings, and will myself stay at a hotel. Although I have no intimate friends beyond those from Reigate, I know a large number of men of fashion from meeting them at the boxing schools and other places, and could introduce you both, and get you into society."

"I am altogether opposed to the idea," Millicent said decidedly. "You want to trot me out like a horse for sale."

"No, Millicent," Mark said calmly. "I only want you to have the same advantages that other girls have, neither more nor less, and for you to enjoy yourself as others do. There is nothing undignified or objectionable about that, especially as we are agreed that nothing shall be said about your fortune. Well, we will think it over. Mr. Prendergast and I certainly do not wish to act as tyrants, and there is no occasion to come to a decision in a hurry. We have only discovered our good fortune to-day, and can scarcely appreciate the difference that it will make to us. We can think over what will be for the best at our leisure, and see if we cannot hit upon some plan that will be agreeable to you."

"Thank you, Mark," she said gratefully. "I am afraid that you must think me very disagreeable and cross; but though you, as a man, have not the same sort of feelings, I can assure you that I feel all this money and so on to be a heavy burden; and were it not for your sake I could wish heartily that this treasure had never been discovered at all."

"I can quite understand that," he said quietly. "At the present moment, even, I do not see that it will be of much advantage to me; but it may be that some day I shall see it in a different light. It has come upon me almost as suddenly as it has upon you. I thought that

after I had finished with the Bastow affair I should set to work to find out this treasure, and that it would probably take me out to India, occupy me there for some time, and that afterwards I might travel through other places, and be away from England three or four years. Now the matter is altogether altered, and I shall be some time before I form any fresh plans. In fact, these must depend upon circumstances."

Mrs. Cunningham had left the room two or three minutes before, thinking that Mark might be able to talk her charge into a more reasonable state of mind were he alone with her, and he added:

"Of one circumstance in particular."

She looked up inquiringly.

"Well, Millicent, it depends a great deal upon you. I know you think that all that has happened during the past year has been a little hard upon you, and I thoroughly agree with you; you were fond of Crowswood, and were very happy there, and the change to this somewhat dull house, just at a time when you are of an age to enjoy pleasure, has been a trial. Then, too, there has been this question of the estate upon your mind. But you must remember it has been somewhat of a trial to me also. I grant that I have had plenty of occupation which has been in every way beneficial to me, and have not at all lamented leaving the country, but in one respect it has been a trial. I don't know whether it ever entered your mind, before that sad time at home, that I was getting to care for you in a very different way to that in which I had done before.

"My father, I think, observed it, for he threw out a very plain hint once that he would very gladly see us coming together. However, I never spoke of it to you. I was young and you were young. It seemed to me that there was plenty of time, and that, moreover, it would not be fair for me to speak to you until you had had the opportunity of going out and of seeing other men. Then came the evening before his death, when my father told me how matters really stood, and he again said that there was a way by which all trouble could be obviated. But I saw that it was not so, and that the hope I had entertained must be put aside. I had never told you I loved you when I seemed to be the heir of the property and you only the daughter of an old comrade of his, and I saw that were I to speak now, when you were the heiress, it could not but appear to you that it was the estate and not you that I wanted, and I felt my lips were sealed forever. Mr. Prendergast said that day when he came down to the funeral, and you told him that you would not take the property, that it might be managed in another way, and you said that you did not want to be married for your money; so you see you saw it in exactly the same light as I did.

"My first thought this morning, when Mr. Cotter told me that the money had mounted up to over £100,000, was that it would unseal my lips. You were still better off than I was, but the difference was now immaterial. I was a rich man, and had not the smallest occasion to marry for money. Whether I married a girl without a penny, or an heiress, could make but little difference to me, as I have certainly no ambition to become a great landowner. I still think that it would have been more fair to you to give you the opportunity of seeing more of the society of the world before speaking to you, but you see you are opposed to that, and therefore it would be the same did I wait patiently another year, which I don't think I should be able to do. I love you, Millicent. It is only during the past eighteen months, when I have thought that I had lost you, that I have known how much I love you, and how much my happiness depends upon you. I can truly say that were you penniless, it would make no shadow of difference to me. It is no longer a question of arranging matters comfortably: it is a question of love. The estate is nothing to me. It never has been anything, and it does not count at all in the scale. I hope that you will put it altogether out of your mind in giving me an answer; and that if you cannot say as truly and wholly as I do, 'I love you,' that you will say as frankly as you have always spoken to me, 'I love you very much as a cousin, Mark, but not in that way.'"

The girl had sat perfectly quiet while he was speaking.

He was standing before her now, and he took one of her hands.

"I love you, dear; I love you with all my heart. Do you love me?"

Then she looked up and rose to her feet, and placed both hands upon his shoulders.

"As you love me, so I love you, Mark."

After that, conversation languished till Mrs. Cunningham came into the room, five minutes later.

"We have come to the conclusion, Mrs. Cunningham," he said, "that there will be no necessity for the visit to Bath. Millicent is otherwise provided for; she has promised to be my wife."

"I am glad, Mark, glad indeed!" and she took Millicent in her arms and kissed her tenderly. "I have all along hoped for it, but I began to be afraid that you were both such obstinate young people that it would never come about. I know that your father wished it, Mark, and he told me that his brother had said that it would be a good arrangement if some day you should come to like each other. I have guessed for the last year, and, indeed, before then, that Millicent would not say 'No' if you ever asked her; but this stupid estate seemed to stand in the way. Of late, I have even come to hope that the obstinate girl would keep to her intention, and that if, as I knew would be the case, you refused to take the estate, she would give it away to some charity. In that case, there could be nothing to prevent your speaking; and even then you would have been between you very fairly equipped with this world's goods. However, the present is a far better solution, and the discovery of the treasure has saved you from three years' waiting before things were straightened out. I feel as if I were her mother, Mark, having had her in my charge since she was a baby; and as she grew up it became my fondest hope to see you united some day, and I think that I am almost as pleased that my hope has been fulfilled as you are yourselves."

CHAPTER XVIII.

After thinking over the best way in which to set about the work of carrying the diamonds to Amsterdam, Mark decided upon asking the advice of his late chief. The latter said, as Mark entered his room:

"I did not expect to see you here again, Mr. Thorndyke."

"Well, sir, I have come to ask your advice about another matter altogether."

"What is it now?"

"I have to convey a diamond bracelet of very great value across to Amsterdam. I have reasons to believe that there is a plot to seize it on the way, and that the men engaged will hesitate at nothing to achieve their object. Under these circumstances I should be very much obliged if you will tell me what would be the best course to pursue. I must say that the bracelet is, with many other jewels, in a strong teak box of about a foot square, at present in the possession of our bankers; they were brought from India by my uncle. I imagine that the rest of the jewels are of comparatively little importance in the eyes of these men, though doubtless they would take them also if they lay their hands on them. The bracelet, however, is of special interest to them, not so much for its intrinsic value, as because it was stolen from one of their sacred idols.

"This was about twenty years ago; but I have reason to believe that the search for it on the part of some Hindoos connected with the temple has never ceased. The soldier who took it was murdered; his comrade, into whose hands they next passed, was also murdered. They next came to my uncle, who forwarded it at once to England. His bungalows were searched again and again, until probably the fellows came to the conclusion that he must have either buried it or sent it away. Nevertheless, to the day of his death he was firmly convinced that