

CHAPTER II

A SOMEWHAT EXCITING DAY

CHARLES BEAUCHAMP went around the little park four times, slowly, wondering about the stranger's incredible statement, and trying to recall to his mind all that he had ever heard of his Uncle Peter. What he knew of Peter Finlay amounted to this :

Peter was born in 1850, the second of a family of five. His father was the vicar of Sturminster at the time. Early in life, the boy had evinced a reckless and unruly spirit, at home as well as at school. On his fifteenth birthday he had been violently and painfully thrashed by the vicar for "playing pirate" to the extent of blindfolding his young brother John—who afterward became an archdeacon—and his little sister Jane—who grew up to marry Algernon Beauchamp, Esq., of Wallengore—and walking them both along a plank and off into the muddy depths of the duck-pond.

The victims had been rescued, with no small difficulty, by the sexton-gardener. Peter had taken his thrashing sullenly. He could not be