

“Secure that famous Vergil, my key to Marston Hall, under Providence, and away home. The difficulty will be getting speech of the old father. But I trust to you for that.”

“To me?”

“To you; and I will tell you how. You are about the only fellow Mr. Marston sees with pleasure; you are the only one privileged to call at the Hall and at the Bower whenever you please. So you must, if you can spare the time——”

“With pleasure, Ned, to help you. I am sure you’ll pay me back in kind.”

“No doubt of it, my dear fellow, and thanks for your kind acquiescence to my plans. You will call on Mr. Marston (my heart softens towards him, as I picture him a father-in-law; with a slight occasional rub he would do very well,) and introduce the subject of books and rare editions. He’ll swallow the bait in a minute, and is certain to talk about his Vergil. Then will be the moment for action. With a half puzzled look you earnestly inquire particulars of the treasure, you ask to have it described, you strike your forehead and say, ‘Why, it is very singular, but a friend of mine, sir, possesses what seems to me an exact facsimile of this work; indeed I should fancy it the identical copy you are in search of; but I fear he will not care to part with it; I know he was at great pains to procure it—which he eventually did, at Paris—and sets a high value on it.’ He is sure to ask you the name, you hesitate, would rather not, understand there is some unpleasantness in the matter, that your friend and he are not on good terms, through some misfortune,—in fact pique his curiosity, his mania, and finally blurt out my name. He will look glum, I know, and cease the conversation, but I’ll bet you that within three days of your visit I receive an invitation to Marston Hall!”

“Very likely you will; I’ll be your best man in that case, I fancy?”

“You are going on quick enough, Frank, but are you sure you won’t be married as soon as I? Who knows whether your journey north may not prove the most fortunate of any you have yet undertaken?”