

What could Mrs. Chilcomb know about the lock? I ventured to reflect. Evidently the good lady guessed what my thoughts were.

"And who should know that lock better than my own self, that spent nigh on twenty years in the lodge in the old squire's time? Before your time, sir," she apologetically added.

At last I was roused into curiosity. "Then you were Mr. Brabazon's lodge-keeper?" I said.

"That I was, sir, and a strange time I had of it. But that's neither here nor there now, sir. Well, I went over to the man—such a nice-looking, white-haired old gentleman, he might have been a retired officer almost—and I told him who I was, or rather who I had been long ago, before your time, sir, and I offered to help him with the key, and after staring at me for a bit he allowed me to try my hand at the rusty lock. I opened it after a while, and a tough job I had of it, sir; but who should know that lock better than me?"

"And was Mr. Brabazon in the coach?" I inquired.

"I asked that question myself, sir; but the old gentleman, or footman or whatever he was, told me it was no business of mine. A testy old fellow, I'll be bound. But it must be himself, the son I mean," she added after a pause, "for that light"—I shuddered as I thought of it—"came from the old squire's room, and I make bold to say that no one but the son himself would dare to take liberties in that room."