

"From the moment they saw the pistols, the brothers seemed to have changed their plan regarding us; for some plan I am certain they had. They would now fain have taken us into partnership with them; but their trade was a woundy bad one, master, with a world more of risk than profit.

"'Why, lads,' said Tom Curlit to Bill and me, 'hadn't you better stay with us altogether? The road won't do in these days at all. No, no; the law is a vast deal over-strong for that, and you will be tucked up like dogs for your very first affair. But if you stay with us, you will get on in a much quieter way on this wild moor here. Plenty of game, Bill; and sometimes, when the nights are long, we contrive to take a purse with as little trouble as may be. We had an old peddler only three weeks ago that brought us sixty good pounds. By the way, brothers, we must throw a few more sods over him, for I nosed him this morning as I went by. And, lads, we have something in hand just now, that, with, to be sure, a little more risk, will pay better still. Two hundred yellow boys in hand, and five hundred more when our work is done. Better that, Bill, than standing to be shot at for a shilling per day.'

"'Two hundred in hand and five hundred more when you have done your work!' exclaimed Bill. 'Why, that is sure enough princely pay, unless the work be very bad indeed. But come, tell us what you propose. You can't expect us to make it a leap-in-the-dark matter.'

"'The work is certainly a little dangerous,' said Tom, 'and we of ourselves are rather few; but if you both join with us there would be a vast deal less of danger indeed. The matter is just this. A young fellow, like ourselves, has a rich old uncle, who has made his will in his favor; but then he threatens to make another will that won't be