

and kindly with their service, but some minutes passed before the steward was able to tell his awful story. When, however, this was done, Mrs. Mossingill, distrusting Andrew's capacity for rapid movement, threw a shawl over her head and shoulders and ran off to alarm Dr. Teulon. With an unsteady hand Abel Pilgrim lifted the glass of strong brandy and water to his lips as Andrew Mossingill went to shut the door of the little parlor, and then, resting his elbows on his knees, he sat staring into the fire. No thought had he of the unfortunate man out on the hill-side still in death, no thought of the widow who was at that very moment despatching messengers in quest of her husband. No, his only thought,—selfish and pusillanimous creature that he was,—was that his partner in evil had left him to bear the brunt of the vengeance which his conscience told him was already advancing with swift stride towards him. In his present state he felt he was unable to make even an effort at escaping; his mind was confused and he needed rest and food. But the time was short, every hour, every minute was precious, and he must devise some means of going to the old cabinet in the lumber-room,—his treasury,—and of escaping unseen while they were conveying the body to the house. Weak though he was, he felt that he could manage to reach the Priory before the others, and he was on the point of starting up when Andrew Mossingill touched him on the shoulder.

"Mr. Pilgrim," he said, "maybe 'tis none o' my business, but it seems to me that 'ere thing is what we may call a visitation. 'That's what it is, a visitation."

"What do you mean, Andrew, by that?" asked the steward, lifting his eyes in astonishment to recognize a strange and rather furtive gleam of intelligence in the ox-like orbs of the landlord.

"A visitation, Mr. Pilgrim, is what I says, for I know that the constable was on the p'int of going to see your master just as the storm came on, but he put it off till the morning, as he well might, for

I never seed such lightning before in all my born days."

So soon! The steward rose to his feet, fear lending him strength, and he almost blessed the storm for the chance of escape which it had given him.

"The constable!" he said; "what did he want up there, I wonder. Well, he is too late for this world so far as—as Mr. Randall is concerned."

"That may be, Mr. Pilgrim, that may be, but if so be that he was not the rightful man, I says as how you must ha' known it."

"I? Nonsense, Andrew! Why, you yourself were the first to know him."

"I may have been mistaken, Mr. Pilgrim; aye, and so may you for that matter. But look here, I wa'n't mistaken when I seed you that morning o' the fire, for all you was dressed up; I wa'n't mistaken when I picked up your watch, wi' your own name inside, under the broken window of the back kitchen. I've kept all this close till now, even from the missus, but I tell you the time is come when you'll be asked to tell a plain story, Mr. Pilgrim."

A plain story! To any other eyes than those of the dull boor whose words had fallen like the stroke of doom on the steward's ear, Abel's ashen face and quivering limbs would have told a tale requiring no interpreter. The ringing in his ears seemed to him like the death-bell tolling for an execution, and like the sear of a hot iron came the thought that he had incurred this terrible penalty for nothing. Yet even in this extremity his strong will did not wholly desert him, although he fully realized that flight would be of little use when Mossingill's story should be made known, for he knew quite well that a suspected murderer whose identity is known can seldom escape from England.

"Andrew," he said, sinking into the chair as if from weakness, "I don't follow your meaning rightly,—not just now, but I'm dazed. She was an old flame of mine, man, the mother of my child. But why