

quietly remarked, "can do no harm. Well, you've come here before going to the lawyers, I expect."

The young man nodded and threw the stub of his cigar into the fire. "Yes," he said, "I had no other alternative."

"And the incumbrance?" inquired the steward, "is that removed?"

"More than a month ago," was the answer, "by way of Harwich and Rotterdam. Glad to go, too. In the prime of life, buxom and good-looking, she may bring the new world to her feet yet."

"Or, better still, she may find a speedy grave in it, Master Randall: 'twas a cursed folly on your part to stoop so low."

"No doubt it was," assented the young man, "but what young man in England is proof against rounded limbs and a fresh complexion? *Nemo mortalium*,"—the last word with the characteristic English sound of *a*.

"I am glad you remember your Latin, Master Randall," said Abel, "or maybe old Summerford would take it into his head to deny the evidence of your face. You know how that Tichborne fellow forgot his French, eh?"

"I remember some of it, at all events, Pilgrim, enough for my wants, I take it."

"Well," returned the steward, drawing three small boxes from his coat pocket, "here are a few trifles, a watch, some rings, and a little Latin book that came into my hands after you were drowned."

"I never was drowned, Abel Pilgrim," said the young man with a frown.

"After your disappearance I mean; no need to take me up so short for so small a slip as that. How they came into my hands is no matter: they are yours now, and if I was you I'd say I'd always kept them by me in my travels."

The young man took the boxes and placed them in the breast pocket of his coat. "And now, Abel," he said, "I have to tell you that I am positively hard up. Packing her off left me bare. You must lend me a little of your savings, old man."

"I thought so," said the steward, "but

I have not lived in your house and off your lands so long to begrudge you a loan at such a time as this. How much will do?"

"Forty pounds will serve my turn; before they are gone I hope to enjoy my own again. Do you think they will fight it out?"

"Not if they are convinced," answered the steward; "there is no more honorable a man in the world than Master Gilbert, and my lady is too proud to act ignobly. Here are fifty pounds, use them with discretion. Go to London, lay the case before the lawyers,—take my advice, go to the family lawyers with your claim, 'twill be best in the long run. And now, I suppose you will leave in the morning?"

"Of course, after I have seen old Summerford. My mind is made up on that point."

"Well, perhaps you are right," observed Pilgrim, "but let your visit be brief. And now, good night, Master Randall, I must have a talk with Andrew and his wife before I go."

The talk with Andrew lasted an hour or more, for their excitement and interest were wonderful to see. Abel Pilgrim, assuming an air of hesitation, scrupled to declare himself absolutely convinced that Randall Arderne was alive and a guest at the Crooked Billet. "If this is Randall," he repeated, "who was that we buried in the family vault?" This position of unwarranted distrust and wavering found no support with the Mossingills; on the contrary, the more that Abel demurred the stronger grew their conviction the other way. Long after the steward's return to the Priory the guest of the Crooked Billet was employed in reading papers in the secrecy of his own room. Being an inveterate smoker, he threw up the window, placed the candlestick on the hob, and suffered the smoke to escape by way of the chimney. He was by these means able to refresh his memory with certain voluminous notes furnished by Pilgrim during a correspondence of some months.