

health and exercise. Her beauty, now much more pronounced than when first we introduced her to the reader, was of the type that dazzles and intoxicates men in general, and this, coupled with the fact that she would bring a fine dowry to the man of her choice, induced a concurrent verdict among his neighbors and intimates that Randall Arderne was a lucky fellow.

In her lonely cottage near the churchyard Harriet Bates concerned herself but little with village gossip. It was currently reported that she was a distant relative of Abel Pilgrim and a widow, living on a small annuity or pension derived from the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society. Abel's known character, and especially his avowed contempt for womankind in the mass, prevented even the busybodies from hinting anything to his prejudice, even though the steward had not provided against possible slander by discreetly whispering here and there that his relative had never been altogether right in her head since the death of her husband, who "had gone to sea somewhere and never came back, poor fellow." This report, together with the woman's unsociable ways, kept her and her neighbors far apart. Her cottage, a part of the Priory estate, stood alone on the rising ground near the churchyard, a couple of furlongs or so from the stable-yard of the Crooked Billet. By turning off from the main road a little to the rear of this yard, Pilgrim might, on his visits to the cottage, spare himself the walk through the village, but he seldom did this. On the contrary, his visits, which rarely exceeded one in every fortnight, were made in open day and by the main road, and casual observers might, and doubtless did, notice that his interviews with the woman were mainly conducted outside on the old blue slate steps of the cottage.

Three days before the morning appointed for the union of Randall Arderne and Dorothy Teulon, however, Abel made a somewhat protracted stay with Harriet Bates. In another sphere, the major-domo would have made a good diplomatist

or ambassador to the court of His Majesty the Czar of Russia, but on this occasion his talents were sorely at fault. He had come prepared to induce Harriet to emigrate to America, but he found her obdurate and determined against his proposal.

"No," she said, "I see through your fine scheme, Abel Pilgrim, and I half suspect you have got it up betwixt you and your master. Ah, which of you is the master, I wonder? You promised to find Mary, you promised he should marry her, and the end of all your fine promises is that he is to be married to that gipsy-faced girl of the old doctor's. I bid you beware, Abel, for devil though you be, the hemp is spun to hang you."

"Tut, tut! Harriet lass, what do you mean by that? Am I a murderer, then, that I'm to be hanged, or d'ye mean to string me up yourself? You talk like a mad woman."

"If not hanged," she replied, "imprisoned for life for conspiracy, and that's worse than hanging I've heered folks say. Tell John Randall this,—'tis my last word: let him marry any other girl than my daughter, and within a week I shall set out to find Gilbert Arderne, the man you have robbed of his right."

The house-steward clenched his long fingers and brought his jaws together with a snap as he heard this declaration.

"Why do you call him John Randall?" he said at length. "You know your story is your own silly make-up. He is Randall Arderne, and all the devils in hell cannot prove that he is not."

"You think so?" she asked with a laugh that made the steward long to strike her down. "I wonder do you really think so? God only knows that—God and yourself; but what will the lawyers say when I tell them the history of Jane Randail of Norwich, and of her adventures in the big house where her base-born child was con--?"

"You lie, you b——!" said Pilgrim, white to the lips with fury. "You are just lying at the expense of the dead, be-