

have I: conspiracy and all that. Your jade is back, and in their power. Hell and fury, that after what I have done I should be lost through a —— of a woman!"

Despite the terrific thunder peal which came hard on the flash, Randall heard every word that Pilgrim uttered.

"It is true, then?" he cried, "and your fine scheme has brought us both to ruin! Gilbert Arderne may be on the way even now, but, curse him! he shall find only blackened walls. Let go, old man! take care of yourself, you have plenty of time and a well-feathered nest. Be off, to America, Australia, anywhere. Let go, I say!"

Wheeling Bess sharply round he dug his heels into her flanks and the mare, with a startled neigh, sprang forward, leaving the steward alone on the hill. A moment after there came a blinding flash, the old man was dashed half stunned to the ground, but even as he fell he saw a sight that almost petrified him with horror. The lightning, bursting directly over his head, found another victim, and in the intense white light of the arrow of death Abel Pilgrim saw horse and rider fall

headlong to the earth. Dimly conscious of a peculiar odor in his nostrils, the steward's senses grew dull and torpid, and he lay to all appearance lifeless while the air shook with the awful report which followed. As soon as he could recover his dazed faculties, Abel started to his feet once more and tottered on to where he knew he should meet a ghastly spectacle. He had not far to go, for there before him, scarcely a dozen yards away, lay the bodies of Randall Arderne and the good gray mare. Except that it was dead there was nothing to indicate that the beast had been struck by that deadly bolt, but the clothes were torn from the rider's right shoulder downward, and his boots were ruptured and torn and shrivelled. Having ascertained all this, Abel Pilgrim, without even pausing to observe that the storm was abating, and that the rain was now little more than a drizzle, turned away from the fated spot and hurried toward the village, urged on by that mysterious power of fate which, as the Greek dramatist tells us, neither tempest, nor war, nor towers, nor dashing ships can control.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

LIKE many of her superiors, Mrs. Mossingill's dread of thunder and lightning was tinged with a feeling of superstition. She would have thought it impious to light either lamp or candle during a thunderstorm, and the stolid Andrew, submissive in all such matters to the more alert will of his better half, was quite content to sit in the dark this evening until assured by his senses that the storm was passing away. When this conviction, however, had taken fast hold of his understanding, the landlord called for a light in the bar, and went through the passage to throw open the front door. Having done this, he struck a match for his pipe, and stood in round-eyed astonishment watching the muddy torrent which coursed down the hill, and which was, though already

diminishing, almost knee-deep in the middle of the road. While standing thus, he was almost terror-stricken to see a man come rushing down the hill,—a man who a moment later stood beside him bedraggled with wet and mire, and in whom he recognized the steward at the Priory, Abel Pilgrim.

"Lord ha' mercy! Abel, what's come to ye?" cried Andrew, as the steward caught hold of the door-post to keep himself from falling; ye look dazed. Come in, man, come in," he added, laying a hand on the old man's shoulder, "into the parlor, quick; there's a fire, and I'll bring 'ee a glass o' something hot. Jane! Jane! come here, quick, here's a job that'll want your tending, I reckon."

Both husband and wife were prompt