

one surprised, started to his feet exclaiming, "Abel Pilgrim, by all that's good!"

"Yes, sir, Abel Pilgrim, at your service," replied the steward, "but you have the advantage—God bless me!" he cried, stepping back a foot or two, "who are you?"

"Who I am I hardly know myself," was the stranger's answer, "but ten years ago I was Randall Arderne, your master's son."

"I knowed it, I knowed it!" cried Andrew Mossingill, "I saw it the moment he spoke to me."

"Randall Arderne's body lies in the vault in the church near by," said Pilgrim, without noticing the landlord's words. "I myself brought it up from the coast the day after the crowner and the jury gave their verdict of accidental death."

"Were you sure that it was Randall Arderne you buried in the Church, Abel?" inquired the stranger. "If so, why I must change my name I suppose. To tell you the truth, I would rather not, now that I have resumed it after all these years. I have sowed my wild oats, and have gathered rather a poor crop except experience. I have a mind now to claim what is rightfully my own."

"Is that why you are here?" asked Abel; "why, if you are the man you claim to be, didn't you go elsewhere,—to Master Gilbert in London, or to some respectable lawyer?"

"I did not mean to make myself known here," said the other, "your unexpected appearance made me forget my caution. But, Abel Pilgrim, you know that I am your old master's son, I can see conviction in your eyes. Time and travel may have,—I suppose must have,—changed me somewhat, for when ten years ago, and in this very room, I told Andrew Mossingill that I was about to go away from Mr. Summerford and his tiresome lessons I was only a boy; now I am a man. You yourself are but little changed, Pilgrim. Do you remember the black pony, Betty we called her, and how I used to ridicule

that miser's hand of yours and the Framingham fingers as I sometimes called them?"

The steward looked about for a chair, and seating himself drew a red handkerchief from his pocket and mopped his brow and face

"I remember it all," he ejaculated; "if you are not Randall Arderne you must be the devil. But, sir, this seems to me,—I am no scholar you know, only a servant man,—this seems to me like a page out of the housemaid's *Family Herald*. We only want a lovely young lady and meetings in the conservatory to make a romance out of it."

"The lovely lady can wait, Abel," said the young man with a laugh. "So, for that matter, can I, but I am tired of leading a false life. I shall claim my own, and that soon, be sure of that."

"Claim it, Master Randall," exclaimed the landlady, "I should think you would claim it, for it is yours. I knew you when first my eyes lighted on your face."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Mrs. Mossingill," was the reply, "it shows that knocking about the world, and living with some very rough diamonds at times, too, have not altogether corrupted me. And now, Pilgrim, late as it is I must have a word with you in private: I want to hear something about my parents and how they behaved when my death was reported to them."

"Yes, sir, yes Mr. Randall," said Abel, passing his long hand over his forehead and speaking under his breath, "of course. Andrew, I'd like to see you directly in the kitchen, if you'll wait up so long."

Taking the hint, the host and hostess of the Crooked Billet, wide-eyed at the events of the night, left the apartment, shutting the door behind them. When they had gone Abel Pilgrim's manner changed a little. Stepping to the door he dexterously hung his hat on the key, rendering it difficult for any person to look into the room.

"A little caution, Master Randall," he