

involuntarily at this sudden outburst, Dorothy did not observe the change wrought in her husband by the letter he was reading. He had drawn it out from a large blue envelope and hurriedly scanned its contents while his wife was speaking. Surely never before, not even when it revealed the red-handed murderer to the avenger of blood, did lightning ever throw its glare upon a more terror-stricken countenance. For an instant, and an instant only, he sat irresolute, then crumpling the letter in his iron grasp Randall Arderne rushed from the room like a madman.

Recovering her presence of mind, and curious to learn the cause of her husband's agitation, Dorothy took up the envelope. This failed to throw any light on the matter,—it was an ordinary business envelope having the names of Wright and Sele, of Lincoln's Inn, London, printed in the left-hand corner. Though these were no longer Randall's lawyers, Dorothy was quite familiar with their names, and she laughed to herself as the thought occurred to her that they had probably discovered some unsettled charge on the estate,—a large sum, perhaps, judging by her husband's conduct. Instead of confiding in her, he had, she thought, gone to make inquiries of Pilgrim, whose presumption would certainly be strengthened if his master encouraged it by appealing to him on all such occasions.

Meanwhile, Randall Arderne, after snatching a hat from the hall table, rushed out into the awful tempest and, heedless of lightning, thunder, and rain, ran swiftly to the stables. They must have seen him from the loft, for Hobbs, opening one of the side doors, admitted him.

"Bless us, measter!" said the man, "you do look 'mazed. 'A'f drownded too. Is th' 'ouse strooken by the lightning, or what?"

"No, no, Hobbs, not that, not that. But Abel—Pilgrim? You met him, where, where?"

"Muster Pilgrim, sir, wor agoing to the Billet, but efter he took the letter fro' the

bag he went to the Copse, 'leastways he seemed to be going there. And a nation bad place it be in such weather."

"The Copse! Well, Hobbs, lead out Bess,—she has the saddle on her yet,—lead her out at once, I say."

The groom stared in open-mouthed astonishment as the order was repeated, for the storm was almost at its height, flash succeeding flash, while the thunder seemed to rend the heavens asunder.

"Take out Bess, measter!" he said, "why 'tis a temptin' Providence to ride in weather like this. There's ne'er a lad in the place 'ill do it eyther, no, not for a fortin."

"Lead her out, I say," cried Randall, "I want her for myself. Confound you!" he added, as the man still hesitated, "do you forget that I am master here?"

"Noa, measter, noa," returned Hobbs as he moved to the head of the stall, "surely noa, sir. But in sich weather as this, and her withers raw from that new saddle that 'ud o'ly fit a dray hoss! But if it mun be, it mun be, I s'poas. Ho! gently there, o'ad gal! so, so!"

After vaulting into the saddle Randall threw Hobbs half-a-crown, and, settling his hat firmly down on his head rode off down the avenue, past the lodge, into the road. Hobbs had truly enough said that to go forth at such a time was like tempting Providence, for dazzling white chains of electric fire seemed to pierce the very road along which the scared horse was moving. One such chain fell, with a hiss that sounded malevolent, so near that Bess drew back on her haunches, throwing her rider almost over her head and revealing the form of a man, bent nearly double as the pitiless rain drove right into his face, and standing within a few feet of the bridle. It was Pilgrim, the man he sought, and Randall, whose voice sounded hollow and raucous, called him by name.

"Aye, aye, Master Randall," cried the old man, stepping forward and laying a hand on the saddle, "I see how 'tis with you. You have heard from them too. So